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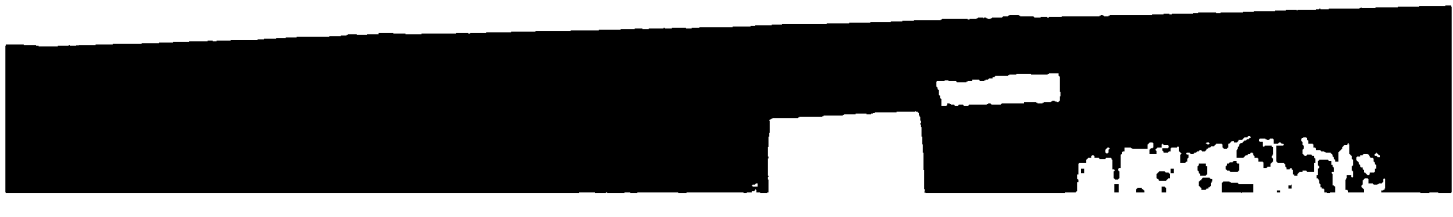
SKETCHES

IN THE PYRENEES,

&c. &c.

VOL I.



SKETCHES IN THE PYRENEES;

WITH SOME REMARKS

ON

LANGUEDOC, PROVENCE, AND THE CORNICE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"SLIGHT REMINISCENCES OF THE RHINE," AND

"THE GOSSIP'S WEEK."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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1837.

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TO MY DAUGHTER,

IN WHOSE HAPPY HOME AND DEAR SOCIETY

I FIRST MADE CLOSE

AND DELIGHTFUL FELLOWSHIP WITH THE PYRENEES,

I INSCRIBE

THESE SLIGHT SKETCHES

OF

THEIR INEFFABLE BEAUTY.

March 6, 1857.

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SKETCHES IN THE PYRENEES,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE FROM PARIS—VERSAILLES AND ITS ECHOES —THEIR SECRETS—RAMBOUILLET—WOODS AND WOOD GODS — PLEASURE-GARDENS — HUNTING AND BEING HUNTED—PROCESSIONS, AND THEIR PROBABLE EFFECTS — DRESS — THE CHATEAU AND ITS DOUBTFUL WATERS—COUNTRY TO CHARTRES—CATHEDRAL SPIRES —COTTAGES AND COTTAGE GARDENS.

One always seems to enter Paris, or quit it, on a fête-day. This is one; and if I had not tears in my eyes, and in my heart too, I might say something of its holiday aspect. But I was sad myself, when we bid it adieu, and the gaiety of the crowd made me still sadder; so I felt relieved when we turned off from the sparkling alleys of the Champs Elysées into the well-known—but to-day deserted —road to Versailles; where, undistracted by new images, I might indulge in recollected ones.

There is always a queer sort of feel about the heart, when the moment comes to leave a place where one has lived long and happily, even though there may be no actual severing of home ties; but especially when we carry with us that feeling of doubt as to the future, which uncertain health naturally communicates to the mind. Even the grateful, well-wishing bow of the porter,—the last whose face offers its expression of concern,—and the cap off of his little son, who stands beside him smartened up for the occasion, have something touching in them; they are not the supple civilities of craving expectation anticipating future favours, but the evidence of regret,—perhaps regard,—whose cause is already in the past.

There are two roads from Paris to Tours: one that follows the course of the Loire, passing through its historical towns, and looking on its legendary castles; and another, which we have taken, (for reasons altogether unconnected with any thing either of taste or choice,) through Rambouillet, Chartres, &c. There may be, and probably are several others; but not having journeyed in their ways, I cannot answer for their being those of pleasantness.

Every one knows,—that is to say every one who has rambled this way,—the often-traversed road from Paris to Versailles, the beautiful bank of Sèvres, the hills of Meudon, and the rich woods of St. Cloud. Not a salient point, scarcely a retreating charm, in this courtly yet sylvan landscape remains unexplored; and English eyes are as familiar with its beauty, as with the perfect loveliness of Richmond Hill, or the patrician elegance of Roehampton; so I shall pass it over in silence, without awakening the echoes. At Versailles the sky was grey and still; a sky put together as if to suit and soften the effect of its characteristic melancholy, which under the influence of a broad, inundating sunshine, changes its complexional gloom into glare,—an arid though gorgeous glare, that brings out every stone, and writes *desertion* on them in gilt letters.

I have talked of not awakening the echoes; but of these second tongues, there are some here which, were they Irish,—that is, answering-ones, it might be curious to question; for they could tell us many a tale of hall and bower, and one with a great moral lesson in it,—one beginning in pomp,

beauty, glory, musk, embroidery, gallantry, and prayer,—running through all the velvet paths of a royal life, and all the rugged passages of a mortal one,—from triumphs and almost heathen adoration, to defeat and utter loneliness. Then merging into another, these initiated echoes might follow that also through the zig-zags of a naturally kind, but feeble nature, to its last stage of abasement and corruption,—deep corruption, from whose vile soil sprang an immortal flower, and with it the deadly tares which darkened its beauty, rendering it hideous in the eyes of the virtuous and the pitying. The echoes must have made sad music then; now they are silent, except when the great waters play, and then the voice of wonder, or of glee, calls up those vocal shadows.

The country to Rambouillet seemed insipid,—perhaps I might boldly say, *is*. St. Cyr was on our route, but we passed it unknowingly, with its recollections of Esther and Athalie, and other chaste and brilliant devices with which the antique Schehezerade amused the leisure of her admiring sultan. The first peep of the forest of Rambouillet was disappointing; it seemed, as we approached

whether the flower-knots and straight pieces of water spread out before the palace are called pleasure-grounds; but if they are, the same words have a very different signification in the Blenheim dictionary. This is Chinese scenery, where a dislocated lady, with her head on one side, might paddle about in a painted skiff, and seem quite of a piece with her accompaniments. Formal gardens hold their beauty less as a possession, than a grant on certain conditions of care and nicety, which grant is rendered void by neglect. The wild flowers and gadding branches, whose rude luxuriance accommodates itself to the ins and outs of natural scenery, assume, when they find their way into a trim enclosure, a briary and forgotten aspect that misbecomes the quaint parterre, shaped into the precise counterpart of its opposite neighbour. The parterres of Rambouillet look at this moment foul and tangled, the palace varnish fast rubbing off; and neglect, like the brown paper of a lacquered screen, begins to show itself through the crevices.*

* When the above was written, Rambouillet belonged to the state, and not to the king. It does so still; but is let to a wealthy individual.

No one comes here now, the people tell us. In the time of Charles Dix there was rare hunting in the forest; and the jocund sound of the horn, and the cheery clamour of the day-break sportsman, often routed the morning shadows. But the crowned Nimrod hunted a day too late, and was run down himself on that memorable third of August, when the men of Paris, laying violent hands on all the vehicles, public or private, that came in their way, dislodged their occupants with a civil speech, and a promise of restitution without injury when done with;* then stuffing in, drove off to Rambouillet to set up a new Jupiter, and hand the old dynasty out of the kingdom. Here the Duchesse de Berri bade adieu to the battered remains of the Swiss guards, with a brusque "*au revoir*;" and here began that famous steeple-chase, that hedge and ditch gallop, when the old racer was flung out, beaten, broke down, and erased from the list of running horses.

These things are still the other day of time, but begin to be the auld lang syne of memory. Ex-

* A promise in all cases (as we have been assured) conscientiously fulfilled.

cept where the high-spirited duchess, like another Anjou, Margarets it in the west, shedding blood fruitlessly, therefore, even in the sense of war, unwisely,—exasperating some, inspiring others, and neutralizing the effect of her courage and perseverance, her noble and undeniable contempt of danger, by her ill regulated head-work, the old stock seem as much forgotten at Gratz,* as James was at St. Germain. Whether the new Charles Edward may find another Culloden, and a luckier one than the old, time will tell; but should the royal exiles be inclined to superstition, there exists an historical parallel—close beyond any other on record—which may well alarm them for the issue.

When the Count de Montford, beaten at Nantes by the Duke of Normandy, was a prisoner in the Louvre, his army discomfited, his cause hopeless, the heroic Joan of Flanders, his undaunted wife, presented her infant son to the people of Rennes, and thus addressed them in the simple home going speech of the times. "Haa, seigneurs! ne vous ébahessez mie de Monseigneur, que nous auons perdu. Le n'estoit qu'un homme, veez cy mon

* At least by the volatile Parisians.

petit enfant; qui sera (si Dieu plaist) son restorier, et vous fera des biens assez."

Maria Theresa did the same: both were successful. Perhaps, had the Duchesse de Berri remembered the historical precedent of the illustrious countess, or the more immediate example of her own fair ancestress, she might have still preserved for her son the possession of a crown. At least, the chance was on the cards.

As we entered Rambouillet, the bells were tolling in a procession of children attired, as for their first communion, in all the coquetry of toilette which virgin white and flowers admitted of,—veils floating, sashes streaming, and red hands clasping the prayer-book, and contriving to grasp the well-starched handkerchief at the same time. Before the children walked two priests, chaunting in the deep cathedral base; behind, two others blowing through the deeper-toned bassoon, whose grave and gradual swell came on the ear with a solemn and almost threatening sound, that strengthened into something judicial and condemnatory as it approached. I never hear this peculiar chaunt without thinking of the gone-by times, when nuns

were buried, and heretics burned alive,—a dark association, but soon dispelled by the innocent faces of the children, and the bustling piety of their anxious friends.

If there were not some distraction, and much vying in these things, they would be pretty, and even touching; for children give grace and interest to all rituals, in which their natural feelings may be supposed to make them untutored actors. But no sooner was the show of devotion over, than the young performers flew back to their expecting mothers, to have their sashes settled and their veils arranged; and this mundane movement seemed to make hypocrisy of the pious airs and expressions of humility, which they had exhibited but a few moments before. Yet still, as they dispersed among the trees, or descended two by two a flight of stone steps that graduate gently into the Parc, their childish forms and innocent-looking dress imaged purity very pleasingly.

Whether the species of emulation engendered by religious exhibitions, (I say religious ones, because they are almost the only public shows in which children decently brought up are permitted

to appear,) be or be not favourable to piety and moral feeling, cannot, I should think, admit of a question. The idea of dress, of admiration, of rivalship; the stimulus of praise, the desire of outdoing others, awakened probably for the first time, mingle with the sentiment of devotion, and weaken, if they do not wholly efface it. Children become for the moment public actors, conscious of having all eyes upon them, and of course each is desirous to play the first part; thus vanity—which nine times in ten engenders envy,—is brought into action, and the religious impression, which retirement would have strengthened, is probably either perverted or destroyed.

Sometimes a religious ceremony is made an instrument by which the spirit of intolerance is grafted into the young mind. I recollect once—it was the day of the fête-dieu at Montmorenci—a sharp little girl telling me that the procession was not to pass along the Hermitage road; adding, with a significant shake of the head, "à cause de Jean Jacques." If there was not more mercy in heaven than man shows to man, what would become of the best of us? For more than half a

century the body of the sceptic (if such he really was) has been mouldering in its tomb; and still the spot in which he breathed and suffered is deemed —because he breathed and suffered in it—too impure for the contact of holiness. How arrogant is the piety of man!—man who is forbidden to judge, lest he should be judged in return. And yet we have had our lesson: the divine founder of our faith, he in whom there could be no sin, sat down by the well-side, and talked with the woman of Samaria, "who worshipped she knew not what;" and suffered Mary Magdalen, "which was a sinner," to minister unto him.

This is a bell-ringing place, but not holy, as the chambermaid informs us; neither is it otherwise, (same authority); but a kind of medium heat, like the interior of St. Peter's at Rome, which, whether the snow falls or the sun blazes, always preserves the same equal temperature. Women prodigiously smart, but evidently no subscribers to the *Petit Courrier des Dames*, yet self-satisfied and happy in their voluminous borders standing boldly up from their foreheads, and then branching out like the wings of a Madagascar bat, as they

could possibly be in the last close fit of the imaginative Herbault.*

Drove through part of the Parc,—perhaps not the best part; it is green and lawny, but in its wide extent there are probably scenes much more beautiful than those which lay in our way, or it would not merit its high reputation. Not much to remark between Rambouillet and Chartres; at Epernon (I believe) nothing; at Maintenon, a château with a considerable display of—stagnant water I was going to say, misled by its green and yellow stillness; but I believe it is living, though it makes no sign. This château was one of the donations of Louis Quatorze to the calculating devotee, who ran (or rather hobbled) away from him when he lay on his death-bed. Pious, placid, and moral lady! who thoroughly understood the tactics of virtue, and possessed every ingredient of religion excepting its true spirit.

Dull plains with a distant belt of wood, and then

* I forget in what year Scheffer painted his Charlotte Corday, which has so completely revolutionized the French women's heads; but I believe about this time. Now they are all flat and compressed, like the Norman Judith's.

duller ones without it. Dropped asleep; awoke the next moment,—yellow fields and brown ones alternating; hay-making, too, but the after-grass like dust.

Another nap; and then a jolt which roused me thoroughly. All corn, with a splendid show of poppies mixing with the quiet azure of the corn-flower. Might, perchance, have shut my eyes again, had they not happened to light upon two tall spires, looking grand and grave in the distance, and—I thought—like the spires of a church or college (I forget which) that I used to love and admire in Bentley's edition of *Gray's Poems*. But that was in my childish days—a long time ago; so I cannot be precise, though I well remember the mourning cats with scarfs and hatbands, and the leaden-eyed melancholy which I used to think so divinely beautiful.

The descent to Chartres varies the monotony of the scene a little. It has wood, and houses niched in it, and a long suburb of clay cottages and clay walls, standing out in a bright sun, with a comfortable air which belongs more to the sun than to the habitations. These, though not sketch-book helps,

have, in the absence of other beauties, the eminent one of cleanliness. From Rambouillet onwards, the dwelling of the peasant has something of a neat and habitable air: vines are trained, and trees planted about it; and the paths before the door actually swept,—a mark of nicety not always evident in places nearer to the capital. I do not speak of these habitations as orderly, sash-windowed concerns; but as quiet homely huts, in which Gainsborough, or perhaps Morland, might, on a soft becoming day such as this is, have found something pleasant. I say a becoming day, for humble scenery of the cottage kind is a pastoral or a pigsty, just as the sky pleases.

But when the sun does shine, what a sweet page of rustic lore is the cottage-garden! no stone or mortar perfection of a wall—the mason's glory—enclosing it; but its own sweet hedge blossoming, and blooming, and glistening in the bright sky, and opening its pretty buds as if it would say "thank you," to the warm air that blows upon it. I have always delighted in the neatly drilled beds of peas and beans, the tufts of sage and rosemary, and other plants esteemed medicinal by their cul-

tivators; the ornamental rose-bush, and tree of luxury—apple or pear, and never could love fine gardens—stiff ones, I mean,—without one robin redbreast corner in them; where, if a poor bird hops about, it is from the shoulder of one cold statue to the head of another, and the bee is too far away from his hive, his thymy bank, and his honey-cups, to make frequent visits. Pleasure-grounds may run into whims, if they please; but the dear old garden has something sacred in its homeliness, which one respects as one does an old library-chair, or a worm-eaten folio that counts ages. The velvet sofa is there, soft and gorgeous, and the morocco leather gilt and embossed; but we are loath to use them, and better love the old corner, and the old leaves which open almost of themselves at the places we are fond of. In a garden, every thing should accord with the habitation to which it belongs. Erasmus's catalogue of herbs, —rue, all-heal, buglass, marjoram, herb of life, &c. become the gammer's scanty flower-knot, as the standard fruit-tree, the nectarine-wall, the winter-walk, and the yew hedge do our old-fashioned manor house.

CHAPTER II.

CHARTRES—OLD CATHEDRALS AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS —CASTLES AND GHOSTS—A BALL-ROOM GHOST—AN UNBELIEVER—CHATEAUDUN—VENDÔME—THE THREE DAYS—WATER MILLS—EFFECT OF A FINE DAY—DECENT GAIETY—CONTRASTS—BRONZING AND BAKING.

Chartres has a large hot square, or rather circus, all in a blaze to-day; and fine boulevard walks canopied with foliage, and a superb cathedral, owner of the two steeples already mentioned. One is rich in the finely-pierced and elaborate fretwork of gothic architecture; the other stands beside it in simpler guise, like a waiting gentlewoman,—no disparagement either to abigail or spire, for every one knows that though the mistress may be the finest, the maid is often the fairest of the two; and as for the steeples, each is esteemed perfect in its way. For myself, I must acknowledge, that the rich lightness of the ornamented one pleased me more than the heavy simplicity of its neighbour, which may

be bad taste; but as my guide-book does not tell me which to admire, I must e'en run risks.

Of the interior of this fine cathedral I can say nothing, not having seen it. An accident has debarred me from what I should consider as an especial pleasure, for I greatly love old cathedrals; they are not merely missals, but histories glowingly illuminated, every colour fresh as the Madonna blue on the soft vellum. When I roam about their venerable aisles, and look on their quaint monuments, where the knight of the Holy Land sleeps in effigy, his feet upon the emblematic lion, his head upon the small stone bolster; and by his side his loyal spouse, her hands crossed upon her breast, the lion exchanged for the gentle and faithful greyhound, and the countenance devout and penetrated, even in its stony stillness; my mind receives an impression similar to that which is made on it by the perusal of Shakspeare's historical plays. The lord cardinals, the mitred churchmen—Canterbury, York, and Winchester; kings and confessors, queens who found no shriving time; abbots, legates, coronations, and interments,—the pageants of the age,—and those who figured in them, rise up

before me in their living lineaments; every stone is a record, every sculptured niche an illustration: and this feeling, though deeper and more awakened when the mind meditates the past within the antique and sacred edifices of its mother-land, is still powerful and present with me in the grey cathedrals of France, many of which were erected during those periods of its history, when wars and alliances brought this country most in contact with our own.

The cathedral of Chartres is one of the long sequency of churches erected during the period when the English were masters of many of the south-western provinces of France; and which mark the time of their lordship over possessions, ages since returned to a more natural allegiance, and show proof of the fine prevailing taste in sacred architecture which distinguished—what present civilization calls a rude period, pervading the religious structures of those olden days with the sentiment as well as the aspect of holiness, and giving to their dark and stately masses a power over the mind, rarely produced by modern gorgeousness, and still more rarely by modern meanness—miscalled simplicity,—which whitewashes its barn, and with

a horror of idolatry greater than even that of Moses himself, allows no mark of art or honour, except the small token of upholstery visible in the stuffed seats and curtained pews of the parish aristocracy. There is a subterraneous church under the cathedral, believed by the people to be an ancient grotto of the druids; who, from the depths of the forests which once (according to old writers) covered the face of the country, prophesied and sacrificed. But being converted to Christianity by certain disciples of our Saviour, sent into Gaul by St. Peter, and afterwards persecuted by their Roman masters, concealed themselves within this same grotto, where they found a place of refuge and of prayer; and which,—when Constantine brought better times,—became the base of the cathedral, then constructed upon it with remarkable magnificence. A certain number of old women called *les dames de sousterre*, or *les sœurs de sousterre*, were employed to take care of it, and attend to the lamps, &c.; the last died (as we are told) a short time since, and the office has fallen into desuetude.

Still the same bare and quiet country,—with now and then a preponderance (as in many parts

of France) of wide plains seeming to touch the horizon, and giving what may be called—if the expression be not inadmissible—distance without perspective. At Chateaudun, an old castle looks forwards from an abrupt hill, with a river at its feet,—a river of many windings, that makes its way pleasantly through a fertile valley. They tell me this château has trap-doors and galleries, chapels, tombs, and knightly halls; in short, all the attributes of a castle of gallant and courtly recollections, every stone of whose pavement has doubtless been pressed by the small footsteps of bright ladies, and the spurred heels of gallant cavaliers,—at least it is pleasant to think so, and to find records in the fancy, when one has not time or means to seek for them in the family archives. One thing is however wanting,—an article too of necessity in a proper old castle establishment,—a ghost. None walk abroad here; but ghosts are known to be of solitary habits, preferring utter loneliness; or, if sent on missions, a tête-à-tête, to any other form of society. So it is possible, that the gregarious taste of the porter's family, who, though six in number, and of both sexes and various degrees of relationship,

think it most agreeable (and merely for the sake of sociability, fear being entirely out of the question) to occupy the same dormitory, may have frightened them off their ground.

I did once hear of a ball-room ghost. It was the spectre of a lady, the wife of an Irish peer; who, being ill and counselled not to go to a certain masquerade, replied with vehemence, "I shall be there, dead or alive;" and kept her word, for (though she died in the mean while) there she was: and some, who had been at her funeral, saw her walking up and down in a corner of the ball-room, which either from the influence of terror, or from supernatural hindrance, none approached. Her mask and domino were white; but the face and form were strongly and fearfully visible through them. It was an eye-witness who told me the story, believing it firmly, but denying his belief, as is usual in such cases. Reason examines, but credulity, when questioned, takes offence, and brings out its *no* boldly.

All the gens d'armes, and half the National Guards of Chateaudun, are gone to anticipate (which sometimes means create) an expected dis-

turbance in a village two leagues off. At every little town on our way, our passports are scrupulously examined, and the names, &c. copied and despatched to Paris. All travellers are submitted to the same inspection, and consequent delay. In the absence of the gens d'armes, to whom this business is especially entrusted, a *commissaire de police* waited on us officially. I asked him if there was any news from La Vendée,—any thing that confirmed the horrible report of the Duchesse de Berri having been burned to death in the Château de Pennessaire. He replied, with much *sang-froid*, that he had heard such a rumour, but did not believe it: he, for his part, never believed rumours; he did not believe there was such a castle, much less that it had been attacked, or burned; seemed to question the existence of the Chouans, and rather to consider the Duchesse de Berri as an agreeable phantasmagoria. He had been too long in the army (he said) to put faith in any thing, especially things that were printed. This ancient county of Dunois gave its name to the renowned Count de Dunois, (the famous Bastard of Orleans,) who, united with Jeanne d'Arc, gained a great victory

over our armies at Patay, and made Talbot prisoner. The portal of the royal abbey of Saint Magdelene is mentioned by old historians as among the most ancient in France.

Some gentle river scenery and a pretty mill at Cloye, and just before it a true French château of the old style,—Tonerre—or Trompette—or Heaven knows what, with a rich bristling of all sorts of things on and about it. Out in the name, which happens to be Montigny, though either of mine would do. As we advance, the country becomes more agreeable, the surface more varied; frequent wooded banks, and a general air of pleasantness. Country houses "few and far between," but not however like the visions of angels; but old, odd things, to which the high chimneys, straight roofs, and supplementary turrets, give an antique and castellated air. Vendôme is agreeably placed on the Loir, (not *Loire*,) the same river that looked pretty at Cloye, and which turns its mills here in the midst of cheerful scenery. Remarked a church porch curiously sculptured,—and more than one, but only in passing. Often the exterior of those old churches is the best part; the inside being not

unfrequently whitewashed and gaudified out of its antique duskiness. Vendôme did once, and perhaps does still, possess a famous abbey—la Trinité, and in the collegial church the tombs of its ancient counts; but whether the revolution may have spared or destroyed them, I know not. Town full of soldiers and looking menacing, as if it stood on the threshold of La Vendée. It is probably to its western vicinity that we owe the show of allegiance to present circumstances, which forces itself into notice in this country. The feeling does not, however, seem to lie deep; the fruits of the three immortal days have not ripened so rapidly as those who sowed their seeds looked for; and expectation, having long outrun performance,—perhaps possibility,—sits down disappointed and repining.

But what days they were! I have heard it asked contemptuously, and even by Frenchmen, "Qu'a-t-on fait de bien?" But it seems to me, that a Frenchman, be his political creed what it may,—be he Carlist, republican, or legitimist, should never hear those three days named without a proud and reverential feeling. For three days a great and populous city remained without a govern-

ment, a police, or a military force; the people sole and absolute rulers; power in the hands of poverty, licence within the reach of the long repressed; yet not an outrage committed, not an article of private property purloined; the stranger and the feeble respected, and even hunger refusing to appease its cravings unlawfully! What a sublime page of history!

And how unlike the common course of other revolutions, brought about by similar means. Public indignation (alloyed, perhaps, in some instances by party spirit or individual views) pulls down an edifice raised with—it may be—mixed wisdom and unwiseness, but placed in trust with the weak or the unfaithful. The people, unaccustomed to the exercise of political power, but under the strong influence of political excitement, lay their unqualified hands on the fragments which lie heaped before them; and without stopping to separate the precious parts from the rubbish, either cast them away, or break them up into distorted forms. The reckless, but often noble spirits who helped mainly to unbase the edifice, are often buried under its ruins; and those who stood by and shouted

while it rocked to its foundation, or set the brand to its tottering walls, take forcible possession of the wreck,—not with the calm, sustained courage of freed men, but with the licentious violence of manumitted slaves. It was thus in the old French revolution; great wrongs were avenged by great crimes. When the desolation has passed away, then the temple is again raised up; but the cement is blood, and the base, ashes.

I have always had a fancy for water-mills, and seldom look on one, if it be attached to any thing cottage-like, without thinking of Ralph and Fanny,* and all the charming illusions of my first opera. On a raw wintry morning, a water-mill may talk of damp and rats, and other comfortless things; but on such a day as this is, its cool gushing sound and spattery playfulness are delicious both to ear and eye. They are frequent here; and the towns being cheerfully situated, some on pleasant eminences, and all with cool walks and foliage about them, give to the general

* Vide *Maid of the Mill.*

air of the country (bare bits excepted) a character, which may be pronounced,—at least with the sky of to-day on it,—decidedly agreeable.

But there is something so happy,—I might almost say so good, in a lovely day; it brings out beauty, as a kind word does the timid feelings of the retiring heart,—so gently and so sweetly, that we can hardly be out of sorts even with an unamiable looking nature, (I was going to say a blank one; but nature is never blank,) when the bright sun is shining and the soft shadows playing on it; and take common pleasantness to our bosoms, as if we had never followed higher idolatries. To-day the hedges, starred with innumerable eyes of pink and daisy; the little gardens tufted with sweet marjoram, lettuce, or purple thyme; the currant-bush, green elder, honeysuckle, and other humble things,—buds, leaves, and flowers, still with their spring freshness on them, create a charming country feeling in the mind, all the more heartfelt for its homeliness. This is just the day for the wild stream and the bank of violets, for the thrush's song and the linnet's, and for the pretty yellow wagtail,—the little

shepherdess of the spring, who hops about with its bright pecking air among the sheep. In France, a department may be sometimes known by the form of its belfries. Here the thin tapering spire rises up from a tuft of trees, or a cluster of low roofs in every village; sometimes a long and steep roof, set all over with projecting windows and flanked with tall chimneys, shows itself through a thick wood, sending my fancy to the châteaux of the Boccage, or Beaupréau,—the new Jerusalem, and with a Lusignan, too, amongst the high defenders of its antique faith and old allegiance.

I can never cease to admire the quiet, yet awakened spirit, in which the people in France convene for purposes either of business or amusement. Fêtes being things of frequent occurrence, are for that very reason soberly, though really, enjoyed: the mass is heard, the gossip indulged in, the southern farandoule or northern quadrille performed, all with due decorum and sustained cheerfulness, but with a total absence of the giddy excitation produced by unusual circumstances; and the whole seems more like a pleasant and accustomed pause from labour, than an unexpected jerk

out of toil into riot, which is too often the character of mirthful meetings in countries vaunting their morality more boldly. The market traffic, commonly a turbulent barter of commodities, is here a quiet interchange of benefits. We passed through two crowded market-places to-day, and are now entering a third,—women marvellously plain, the young looking old, and the old brown and glazed as gingerbread, but models of neatness, from the well-bleached head-cloth to the tidy shoe, or clattering sabot.

It is well they are so, for nothing but its neatness could redeem the stout linen cap—the French night-cap, as it used to be called, or the forehead-binder, opposing its mass of dead white to the scorched and blazing skin, and contradicting all that Ovid has said on the subject of contrasts. Nothing less than a downright Hebe could stand it, and the gods would be sorely puzzled to find a cup-bearer amongst the bandle-cloth and egg-baskets which we have at this moment in view. In Italy the sun bronzes, in France it bakes: the fishermen of Naples and its coast are like bronze statues; the women too, of the same class, often (though not

CHAPTER III.

TOURS—FIRST EFFECT—SUNSHINE—MOONLIGHT—THE GREEN BONNET—NAMES AND THEIR MAGIC—THE LONG AGO—FIRST IMPRESSIONS—PERHAPS FALSE ONES—INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH SOCIETY—SOCIETY.

The approach to Tours is imposing. The Loire sweeps by with a calm and noble flow, deriving from its own breadth and fulness the character of dignity which nature has, in this particular spot, denied to its banks; for whatever may elsewhere be their claim to lofty or romantic beauty, here they are low, and but for their fine and strong point, the town would be almost featureless. The scene is however largely composed, and there is a calm Flemish colouring about it that, like the dewy softness of a Swanveldt, or an Ostade, refreshes without exciting the fancy. The bridge is splendid; and the ample river, the boats at anchor or in movement, and the architectural preface which the

old towers put forth, form altogether a fair and pleasant picture, with some green and woody bits about it, that rise agreeably above the general tone. This seems poor praise for a view which has so often been extolled to the very skies; but I describe it as it strikes me, and though my impression may be a wrong one, I cannot borrow that of another.

It is true, that certain views require certain lights; and that many change, like the hues of a drake's neck, from a ray to a blot, as the sun shines or darkens on them. If the day be bright, an open river-view is all warmth and sparkle: if the next be grey, it is cold and dull: we perceive that its beauty was the effect of a favourable casualty, and scarcely know it for the same scene which the great sleight-of-hand master had warmed into picture. Moonlight is, however, the true setting off of calm, broad, silvery scenery, where a river forms the great feature, and the dependent landscape is just enough indented to throw down shadows on its lucid bosom: the wide blue sky so full of hope, the earth of peacefulness, the long track of light, compact yet broken, marking its starry way on the

waters, and the tall spire rising from its dark base and growing gleamy in the moonshine, are sweet ingredients of which the mind makes magic.

Once upon a time,—it was in summer days, when all things put on their best looks, I chanced to be in the habit of seeing a young lady (not knowing her) always in the same dress, and always —as I thought—with the same pretty, piquant, original look which had at first sight charmed my fancy. She never changed her bonnet; it was a capote of bright, tender, grasshopper green, that closed in upon her small round cheek, just as spring leaves might do about a pretty pink flower. Whenever the little green bonnet was seen approaching, my companions used to say, "Here comes your beauty;" and I was proud of my taste until winter came, and with it a black velvet hat,—a French contrivance,—unveiling the face, which proved to be a broad one, and lined with a spread of full-blown roses, that turned the tinting of the cheek to violet, and seemed to enlarge a forehead which had no longer any shade upon it, and was formed to look bold without it. If not an absolute red cabbage, hard-cored and sturdy, she was at least no longer

—that river of past times, so long what might be almost called the line of demarcation between the ancient country of the Franks and the independent sovereignties which, being now amalgamated with it, form the great kingdom of France,—that gives a powerful historical interest to this spot. Names have often a cunning magic in them: here the very air is full of their power, full of those ancient ones which queens and noble ladies wore in honour—or otherwise, but whose antique simplicity is so beautiful. A soft and simple surname mingles charmingly with a proud hereditary denomination; the last (allied to old remembrances) gives a loftiness to the first, and derives from it a womanly and tender naïveté. What proud yet loving names are Mary Stuart and Jane Grey! and here Eleanor de Guyenne,—a proud yet gentle name, which would have well designated a purer spirit than hers was who bore it; Margaret of Anjou, another of the same cast and appropriation; Marie de Gonzagues, whom Cinq Mars loved and wooed in the embowered shades of Chaumont; with other interveniug ones that make sweet music to the ear, are with us. The old links, sometimes of

flowers, sometimes of iron, which formerly united us with France, have so blended the country of the Loire with our historical recollections, that it has—if it be not incongruous to say so,—all the charming odour of that never-to-be-forgotten thing —our first story-book. Every spot here brings back the time when monarchs fought their own battles, when history was often poetry, though written in rough rhymes, and too often in sanguinary characters; when kings—and not those of Brentford either—entered by sound of trumpet, one at the right hand door, the other at the left, to talk away provinces, or barter kingdoms; while dames—and proud ones—stood by, each backing her party with royal Billingsgate: the one a cankered grandam and a queen, the other "a sad and passionate lady;" but both inexhaustible of speech and rancour, and one of them the most distressed —since Niobe—and lost of mothers.*

But we have more flappers here. Walter Scott has rebuilt Plessis les Tours with a master hand and an enchanted trowel, which will long outlast the stone and mortar of the *grand reliquaire*,

* Vide Shakspeare's *King John*.

Mâitre Pierre, who contrived to die, and, as it happened, in that identical castle, though hung over from stem to stern with life preservers from all the shrines of Christendom.

But it is time to enter Tours, the chief city of this fair Touraine, which presents itself like a capital, with a splendid street (la Rue Royale) opening from the bridge and traversing the heart of what, but for it, might be deemed an ordinary country town, but to which this great artery gives life and action. The first view is striking,—gay, handsome, and perfectly metropolitan; but there is something glaring about it, something (I fancied) demonstratively dressy and tea-drinking in the street groupes, and awful in the report of a frequented mall *(mail,)* still called by its old-fashioned name, so full of red heels and patches, where (as in most places of similar resort) the private history of every passing individual is probably caught and spitted for inspection, as humane children transfix a cock-chafer, and where there is, doubtless, circle within circle, like the filigree globes of an Indian toy. But I have formed my idea of Tours and its society from report, coloured perhaps by prejudice; and there is

certainly something very impertinent in a stranger like myself *probablying* and *perhapsing*—as far as in her lies—a place out of its reputation, though without any means of judging, except those limited ones afforded by a drive through the streets, and a lounge at the inn window. Perhaps the mall is deserted, the people the best-natured in the world, no tea drank, and dress at simplicity point. It may be, that all the household, fire-side loving deities who preside over Tours, may just now be railing at me from their high heavens, and setting me down as an impudent empty blockhead—for the gods call names—who talks instead of inquiring. Alas! what traveller, whether his journey be to the town's end, or the world's end, does not do so sometimes!

Every place, however, has its local physiognomy, and Tours I must think a very decided one. It is not the usual physiognomy of a French provincial town, but rather one that seems to have been conferred upon it by its English population, and its English system of society; both (as we are told) now on the decline, if not almost extinct.

I do not exactly know how it happens, but cer-

tainly, notwithstanding their many sterling and excellent qualities, our countrymen do not always improve the spot on which, in their foreign migrations, they happen to settle. Inns, it is true, are bettered; lodging-houses become suddenly neat, carpeted, and comfortable; shops brighten up; the pastry-cook who arranges ball-suppers, or supplies routs with croquignoles and orgeat, refreshes the stale bonbons that have garnished his windows for the last half year, and announces captain's biscuits, muffins, and mince pies, according to the season; while the milliner, who calls herself Parisian, exchanges her humble show of pasteboard shapes, for a thin curtain with a mystery of flowers, ribbons, and feathers behind it. Sundry shops diffuse the blessings of English drugs, English pencils, paper, water colours, pins, cutlery, &c.; the butcher salts tongues and rounds of beef *à l'Anglaise*; the baker makes English rolls;—in short, none are altogether faithful to native talent and invention except the milliner, whose goods are always announced as fresh from the capital, and the patriot coiffeur, who still rajeunits *à l'instar de Paris*.

This shop-window influence denotes the circulation of the golden good (or it may be, evil) by the British residents; and a few individuals are, no doubt, permanently benefited. But cupidity is sharpened, or excited, and of course the spirit of extortion called into play, to the advantage, probity apart, of one in ten, and the injury of the other nine. The native inhabitants let their houses, and retire into cheaper quarters; should any remain, the new comers take care to make society too expensive for them—indeed very often for themselves also; and so one half are obliged to sit *below the salt*, or to exhaust their resources in endeavours to obtain a post above it; while those who, from assurance or some lucky casualty, keep the head of the table, are often the very persons, morally speaking, who ought to stand at the buffet.

So say many who have tried Tours as a residence; perhaps this *say* may be the slander of the mortified, for others aver that when Tours was an English colony, the ethics of society were conscientiously practised there; and that it would have been deemed improper (if not immoral) to

have visited any one who had not been previously received by Lady A——, or Mrs. B——, C——, or D——, who had alternately wedged themselves into the high seat of patronage. Now Tours is French again, or nearly so, to the despair of the innkeepers, who wail after their prey like disappointed sea-gulls.

Except in the dear home circle, and the charming community of the country-house, the French certainly understand society better than we do. With them it is a relaxation, with us a business; in one country an intercourse, in another a ceremonial. I speak generally; not of our more rare and delightful exceptions,—charmed circles where minds develope their riches in the atmosphere of sympathy; but of the vying concern, consequently the cold and ceremonious one, which we too often make of it. High conversational people use society as a stage, aspirants as a stepping-stool; the herd as a matter of necessity, or a means of ostentation: but none in any station will receive their acquaintance, unless they can do so in a way perfectly in keeping with their neighbours' means—not their own.

The French are exactly the reverse of us: be matters how they may, they are never embarrassed. Small rooms, dark stairs, furniture out at elbows—it is all one. Even guests without a name are received with the same urbanity as more distinguished ones, if their obscurity be redeemed by good breeding and agreeability; but if they can *narrer*, *conter*, or *raconter*, with tact and spirit, success is certain, though unprepared by a previous reputation, which (they say) is necessary to ensure it to those who would adventure in the talking line in England.

CHAPTER IV.

TOURS, CONTINUED—ADVANTAGES AND DRAWBACKS—OLD MODES AND NEW ONES—REGRETS—THE LADY OF NANTUA, AND HER FAN—SAINTS AND MIRACLES—THE CHATEAU OF PLESSIS—HUNTING AND HUNTERS—LEGENDS—A SHOW OFF—THE RAPPEL—CATHEDRAL—LIBRARY AND BIBLES—THE DWELLINGS IN THE ROCKS—STRIKING VIEW AND IMMEDIATE SCENERY—THE HAMLET IN THE FOREST—COTTAGE AND CONSCIENCE PEACEFULNESS.

THIS is Pinkney's paradise; and I remember when a peep into his *camera lucida* sent crowds to the beautiful banks of the Loire. Some settled here, others were disenchanted;—still Tours possesses such a catalogue of advantages, that it will doubtless be re-peopled by fresh hordes, as soon as France has accomplished her days of purification from émeute and cholera, and can throw out her feelers, and entice fresh flies into her cheerful bosom. A fine town, a noble river, a pleasant, cheap, abundant country,—those who know it better than I do

say, a beautiful one,—with (according to report) a primitive peasantry, and a peaceful town population, are great and reasonable attractions; they are all united here, and a dissentient, like myself, feels at a loss *to show cause.*

Tours is just the sort of place to make a traveller —dropping down on it unawares—clap his hands, and cry O! and yet, for my own particular pleasure, I should prefer "the hollow valley of Bagdad," or any other valley,

"Lonely, leafy, cool, and green,"

where the birds find a pleasant home, and invite others to it with their sweet song. The *juste milieu* of a sociable country town, with its monotonous dissipations, quarrels, etiquettes, and scandal—its Paul Pry's and its Peggy Pry's—its gossips' net-work thrown over and fastening down mind and movement, and no good-natured mouse to nibble them out again, would be to me positive wretchedness. Between the individual liberty, variety, resources, and (to hermits like myself) delightful solitude of a capital, and the quiet, inestimable leisure and ready power of being alone with nature and telling her one's unworldly secrets

which the downright country affords, my inclinations find no medium.

The gentle splendour of the Loire,—tame I must think here, notwithstanding its breadth and copiousness,—gives me a desire to go along with its stream, and do justice to its higher claims. From Orleans to Nantes is (they say) all picture; but there is a shadow over Orleans,—it is not a bright word in our history, I mean our moral history; one does not dwell on it, or rather on the episode of its virgin warrior, with pleasure or with pride. Rouen is still too near, in thought at least, and that martyrdom for which we, alas! and alas! furnished the faggots.

In the provincial towns of France that are not commercial ones, there is usually a character of old-fashionedness, both about the place and the people, which, by merely standing still while other things pass on, becomes originality. At Tours, this character seems completely effaced; ladies, shops, equipages, and people, are all Parisian—to the eye at least; the capital at second hand, and the exquisite gusto lost in the re-heating. One thing, however, there is that never fails to give an

air of originality to the popular meetings in France, and that is the costume of the peasants, never quitted for the variations of fashion. Even in the very neighbourhood of Paris, the sumpter laws of the village are tenaciously adhered to, and the quaint garb which time has made historical is presented to us,—not on a pack of cards, or a tapestry arras, but fresh and living. The markets of Paris are still as full of antique caps, blue petticoats, scarlet jackets, and gold hearts with crosses at the end of them, as any in Bretagne, Provence, or Normandy. Women still steer their stubborn cavalry through the brilliant streets, seated between their panniers of grapes, or baskets of apples, in the short mantelet of whitish cloth, fortified with double capes and bound with black, just as they may do at Arles or Quiberon. This sort of variety exists at Tours, as in other places; but one looks in vain for those charming old fashions, so full and reminiscent, that still hold their day in many of the remote and by-way towns, which those who love records find so attractive; and those who do not, so flat.

I shall never forget the heavy glass-panelled

eight-inside coach, drawn by oxen and filled with gay ladies, that in one of our former peregrinations came down like a three-decker on our frail modern machine, at the issue of a cross-country road in the Bourbonnais. It was Doña Mercia's berline, in the old illustrations of Gil Blas, point for point; and as it lumbered along, sticking conscientiously to the regular ruts, brought all the intrigues of Madrid and Seville, from the European politics of the count duke to the home ones of the Scipios and Fabricios, back to the memory.

The mind will always, when a scene is new to its observation, hunt through it for other novelty, and repine when it does not find it there. In England, the capital is every where; stage-coaches, and mail-coaches, and steam-coaches, have levelled all things. The slow waggon, whose toiling progress made a journey to London from a distant province seem something akin in difficulty to an East-India voyage, is as completely gone by as Love in a Village, or the Jolly Miller; and the Dolly Madge (now Dora or Margaret) of the hamlet, fired with the desire of seeing life, springs up on

the top of the coach in a regular Oxford-street toilette, with a gay good-by to home, and a nod of recognition to the coachman. If a cottage is to be let in a remote village, the advertisement is always tailed with a notice that "coaches pass twice a-day;" if in a popular one, "every hour;" and with this rapid circulation of mind, its powers, inventions, and improvements, goes that of customs, manners, and morals,—the last not always the least susceptible of fashionable influence.

And alas! for the wassail-bowl of buttered ale, or warm lamb's-wool! It is made over to the farm house: the glistening ivy and red holly berry follow its lead; the misletoe hangs only from smoky rafters—at least I fear so; and the pie, the Christmas pie, where is it gone to? Does it still decorate the sideboard of the old-fashioned mansion? Is there still an old-fashioned mansion proud of its castle of pie-crust, within whose massive walls the huge goose, boneless and curiously seasoned, encloses the finest turkey of the soil; who, itself inlaid with ham and spices, makes room within its hospitable bosom for a hare, and perhaps a brace of pheasants, all disencumbered of their superfluities,

and in their turn affording shelter to the smaller winged things, who, buried in mushrooms and other dainty stimulants, fill up the hollows: while the immense mass, steadied—or, as the cooks say, *settled*, in a sea of savoury jelly, yields its rich slices,—in which all good things from the goose down through and through to the little birds, are marbled into a tempting mosaic,—to the old-fashioned appetite of the morning sportsman, or the supper-loving crony?

What a pity that such hearty home-customs should be sent down, like stale bread, to the kitchen! When I lived in the country, I did my best for them; and now that, like Jacob, "I dwell in the land wherein my father was a stranger," I still insist on as many pudding, pancake, and cross-bun observances as possible.

But Paris influences do not extend so far as London ones, and in getting out of that capital, one expects to get away from them; for there are still corners and customs left in France to delight the eye, I may almost say the heart,—old usages and tomb-stone figures, that comment history and have a raciness about them that makes modern ones seem

often spiritless. A grisette in an opposite shop, who arranges her hair every two minutes in a pocket looking-glass, pleases me less (though really pretty) than an old lady of Nantua, who once made our point of view in the same way; to wit, from the inn window. Talking of old things brings her before me, as she sat at the door of her dwelling on a gentle summer's evening, in the wired fly-cap and dimity negligée of other times; her blooming maid standing behind her chair, the quaint cap of the country framing in her youthful features, and in her hand the ample fan,—perhaps embellished on one side with the bower-scene of Chantilly, or the Versailles figure of a courtly Clelia, sideling her hoop along a bank of roses; or it might be with the energetic effigy of Madame Malbrouk, waving her handkerchief from the top of her tower, while a scroll held up by Cupids over her matronly head developes the first line of the ballad, the *Malbrouk, s'en va-t-en guerre*, sung by a queen,* (poor queen!) who heard it hummed over the cradle of her child, and fancying it, made its melody European. The back of the fan (only

* Marie Antoinette.

meant to meet the eye of the proprietor) had, I know just as well as if I had seen it, two full-blown roses carelessly shaded on it; stalks crossed, leaves corresponding, and two doves cooing on a spray in the middle. Mistress, maid, fan, fly-cap, and negligée, made altogether a group from Molière,—fresh too, and vivid; and with a certain courtly air about it, which old modes are apt to retain if originally of a substantial cut and quality. But in the fleeting fashions of the moment there is rarely any picture; whatever a fashion may pass into when time has fixed its identity, its immediate associations must always have more of millinery than poetry about them.

In holier times, Tours was a city of saints,—few were richer in pious men, or legends; among many, St. Martin, and St. Gregory were perhaps the most remarkable. St. Martin, son to the beautiful Helen of Constantinople, and the bold Florus, king of Hungary, belongs as much to the story-book as to ecclesiastical history: like St. Ignatius de Loyola and others of the calendar, he began life with the sword; but having bestowed the half of his cloak on a beggar, who afterwards revealed to him

that he was Jesus Christ himself, laid it down and took up the cross. Gregory of Tours, that learned chronicler and edifying prelate, modestly attributed the miracles that he himself performed, to the marvellous virtues belonging to a small portion of the dust of his canonized predecessor, which he carried about him; and so highly venerated was his tomb, that when Pepin the father of Charlemagne was dying, he caused himself to be brought to it. Clovis, too, heaped it with precious gifts, and condemned a soldier to death for having cut some of the grass that grew within its neighbourhood. It was the famous abbey of Marmoustier, founded by the same St. Martin, that possessed the chapel of the seven sleepers. The legend says, that seven nephews of the saint having been called in a vision by their already beatified uncle, fell asleep (in the language of Scripture) at the same moment, and were buried within its enclosure. Of Marmoustiers, little now remains; of Plessis les Tours, a tower, with an old house attached to it, scraped and whitewashed, and the newly furbished up walls trying to make the long roof look modern. It is a manufactory

now of something,—I think they said shot. We stopped at the gate, perhaps the same at which Louis de Tremouille at the head of four hundred gentlemen knocked boldly, demanding and obtaining from the gripe of Louis XI. the estates of which he had been unlawfully deprived. One is obliged to call up recollections here, for there is nothing thought-stirring or testifying in the place itself. The small iron wicket exists no longer, and the cages and oubliettes have vanished with their uses; which *vanishing* has (notwithstanding what I have just now said) both a thought and a blessing in it.

Fine forest-hunting (as we are told) at Tours; wolf and boar, and the fox-chase in perfection, flourishing under English patronage, some one said who meditated a compliment. This was always a famous hunting-country. Louis the Twelfth hunted here with leopards; his tremendous predecessor with rats; or rather, when he could no longer take the field himself, indulged in private rat-hunts in his own royal château of Plessis;—a sweet pastime, and withal, kingly! Ladies have doubtless hunted here in coaches; princes by torch-light: there is no end

dow, looked out: and there was Night, with such a star on her forehead! but nothing else: no tramp of feet; no sudden opening of casements; no buzzing groupes forming simultaneously,—invariable precursors of tumult in the capital; all quiet but the drums. So I returned to my bed, and while I lay there conjecturing, came Sleep, and put a finger on each eyelid; and when I awoke, the hotel was still in its place, the grisette at her shop door, and the privileged inn-beggars looking up at the windows.

The cathedral of Tours must be interesting, for such things always are so, more or less. Saint Gratien, Saint Lidoire, and Saint Gregory,* had (I believe) each a hand in it; but I, alas! have put neither hand or foot. A journey and a sprain, or something in the way of one, are with me of late almost synonymous. As soon as I begin the first, some ill-conditioned pixie usually compliments me with the second; and though I love old cathedrals as I do old oaks, or old usages,—that is dearly, yet I am obliged to content myself with the spires here, just as I tried to do at Chartres, and more-

* The patron saint of Tours.

over to forego the sight of the museum, which is said to contain some clever pictures, and of the library with its curious specimens of early printing and precious manuscripts; among which is the most beautiful of the family of illuminated bibles, the famous one of Mayence, interesting from its age and unsullied brightness; and another especially historical, on whose white vellum and gilt-lettered page the kings of France were used to take the customary oaths, as abbots and canons of the church of Saint Martin. These manuscripts are exquisite toys, triumphs of ultramarine, shell gold, and magical fingers; but when one is seriously told that a whole life has been spent on a single volume—perhaps not even sufficed for its completion, we feel disposed to ask if such rare ingenuity was given for such puny purposes. In the cathedral is a monument of two children of Charles the Eighth, reputed beautiful; and which was removed from the church of Saint Martin at the destruction of the edifice, of which nothing now remains but the tower of Charlemagne.

I have seen too little of this garden of France, this fair and fertile Touraine, to judge of its actual

beauty; but that little has rather disappointed me. Fair it is, and fertile; but not of that exceeding fairness which endues fertility with loveliness, making the latent good appear, even to the unphilosophic eye, the present beauty. While saying this, I feel how (literally) audacious it would be to set up an opinion formed on road-side views, which may, and I should think do, preface it unfavourably; just as if one were to decide on national character, or the state of society and morals in a foreign land, by the information collated during a stay of three or four days at an hotel, even with the help of an ambassador's ball, or a banker's dinner.

What we have seen appears pleasant, rather than remarkable; soft cottage scenery, that if it were spring time and the fruit-trees out, would be one sheet of blossoms; neat hedges enclosing neat gardens,—the whole country indeed a garden; and the rustic dwellings simple, rural, and just what they ought to be. The most characteristic dwellings here are not, however, the most rural; they are hollows in the rocks, where families nestle who do not love landlords or taxes, and who find commodious habitations in these natural caverns. A

and fine-drawn spire, follows the line
to the left; the ruder ridge has villas
and gardens that spread out till th
road that lies between them and th
first, the eye sees nothing in this rid
of rock; but, as it looks upwards a
something that seems like a low and
mental pillar becomes visible among
stalks, or the patch of grass or grain
its thin layer over its rugged surfac
appears, perhaps close to it; a third
tant; and while we are wondering wl
be, and conjecturing antiquities, a
smoke rises up through the tube of
old stone-work, and discloses the secr
habitation under the earth. On a c
tion, a small window—perhaps two,

perpendicularly to its highest point, and at others breaks down into a rough terrace or abrupt declivity just above the subterraneous dwelling, of whose roof long grass, gay weeds, or a few straggling vines, make a wild garden. These ready-made habitations are abundant in the rocks of Touraine, and rarely (it is said) are without inhabitants: they are commodious and, strange to say, healthy.

I have spoken of the southern line of hills on the other side of the river, and must not forget the charming view which it overlooks, and the marvellous light in which we saw it. The city and its old cathedral darkening under a mass of heavy summer clouds, which obscured the sun itself, but not the beams that rayed out broadly from beneath it, and sparkled on the wide river and its pale leafy islands; all but the town was bright,—the distant hills, the near fields; but the city sat heavily on its plains, and looked, in the stilly darkness that hung upon it, as if there was not a living soul within its walls. It is from a point close to a huge, staring château,—the most conspicuous thing on the hill, but whose name has

gable to the sun, another running away from it into the apple-trees; here a hawthorn bush, there a broad stumpy elder, flowering over the garden wicket. A cow gazed at herself in a still pool, and a little boy lay on his back beside her, looking up at the sky; the ground rose gently all round the hamlet, and the trees which grew on it covered the roofs with their shade.

I never saw a sweeter apparition,—and it really looked like one; for, except the little boy, there was not a human being visible,—or audible either; plenty of cock-crowing, and some flurried gabbling from a dozen or so of ducks, who had tucked their legs under them, and were warming themselves on a sunny spot, which they had made puddle of by the pool's side; but otherwise a still and sultry silence,—the silence of a summer noon, when the air seems heavy with sweetness. If I had been suddenly asked for a name for this secluded spot, I should have said *Rest*; the inhabitants were all out cutting wood, or gathering sticks, or working in the distant fields, children and all; and the babies too,—nobody left behind but the little boy and an old woman, whom we discovered spinning

to forest traditions in France, and tales of hunters from Clovis to Charles Dix. Legends are delicious helps to scenery, and to the mind also; for if they are not true to the letter, they are to the spirit, manners, passions, and scale of knowledge of the times to which they belong. The traditionary fables of a past age, are perhaps as faithful a record of the people who believed in them, as history is of its events.

A sweet evening tempted us to the window. Beneath it, the conductor of a diligence bundles in his customers, among whom is one very conspicuous package,—an adventurous fair, apparently under her own protection; and who, mounting up lightly, throws herself into the cabriolet, entrusting the care of an old blue mantle, edged with rabbit skin, to a fellow-passenger; while she adjusts the marmotte that confines her blowzy night-cap, with a hand meant to be the destruction of the simple-looking man who places himself beside her. Then there is a rapid huddling on of various draperies, and a look up at us with a pair of southern eyes, and a showy laugh—probably at her own thoughts, for no one seems to address her,—that displays a

set of large white teeth back to the very wise ones. I never saw any creature so full of itself, or so satisfied that all is as it should be for producing effect. Perceiving that we observe her, she turns round, and gives us a killing full-front shot, fluttering her marmotte with a kind of half-gay, half-wicked Fornarina air inexpressibly diverting, and then disappears—meteor like, perhaps to blaze out again "ere the owl hoots," as the Phœdre or Iphigénie of some village *tréteau*.

Went to bed lateish, and was hardly asleep when some troops, on their way to Nantes to frighten the Chouans, disembarked for refreshment; and with such battle-shouts and drumming, that, suddenly awaking, I thought July was come again. The loud rappel—so long the Paris *angelus*, and too familiar to be mistaken, rattled as if La Vendée was at the gates. I started from my bed, thinking that the town was up; or, at least, that Sir Hugon of Tours was galloping about in armour, (as is his custom on summer's nights); or that the Grand Veneur,—the black spectre of the forest of Fontainbleau,—had crossed the country with his phantom hounds and horns; and, opening the win-

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MONTBAZON is prettily placed, with the ruins of a castle,—a Julius Cæsar, as they say, and a good sketch-book thing,—looking down on it. Stopped to change horses before the door of a garden-house, when the wicket opened suddenly, as the cavern did to the "sesame" of the Forty Thieves, and two tier of anxious faces appeared filling up the aperture. Below were three little French girls, tanned and crabbed, with swarthy locks and keen,

I never saw such a bringing together of ash trees, as since we left Tours. The ash is not a generally diffused tree, like the oak or the elm, but here it is a feature in the landscape; so is the walnut, which at a distance loses its graceful shape, and looks round and formal; and the cold poplar, dear to Flemish painters, who know how to make its compact and spiral form tell as an element of calmness. Some idle women came round our carriage at Ormes, measuring us inquisitively, with a loitering yet anxious air, as if they would have given an eye or a tooth each to have known something more about us. The French are curious,—laughably so sometimes, but not ill natured'ly.

Near to Ormes is a château of the Marquis d'Argenson, reputed one of the finest in France. We did not see it; one feels less disposed to go out of the straight road to see a modern château, than abdicated or ruined ones: these belong to the romance of history. Of such, as well as of the proud strong-holds, counting centuries yet still equal to the purposes of defence, France has a large proportion, as of the feudal and chivalric records which give them interest. When I see

genuine fancy or poetic feeling; for to such those old memorials, twice consecrated—once by time, and once by story,—seem too sacred to be handed over to the profaning touch of beautifiers and repairers.

No more blue and silver jackets to-day, but post-boys fresh from the plough, who push their cattle over the smooth roads as if they were winged; if they were, it would be flying, and now it is only next door to it; but I scarcely ever saw such speed. Met some quiet farmer-looking men, jogging along with pistols in their holsters, probably fancying every bush a Chouan. Hay-making again, and grass of the true Twickenham green,—nothing parched but the women: now and then a white sail glimmering through the trees tells us that a river is near, though not in view,—the Vienne, I believe, which we have already crossed at Ormes.

Travellers' miseries are, in general, bad inns, bad roads, bad horses, and bad weather; but the misery here is the cutlery trade. Every idle girl, or bold one, who prefers spending her time at the inn-door, or on the high way, to working diligently at home, runs out with a handful of penknives as

produced an English one; and *la petite marchande*, turning away sorrowfully, acknowledged with a sigh that English cutlery was the best in the world,—she did not know why; perhaps it was the water; and then she sighed again. I purchased a pair of scissors, which, for the capability of cutting, might as well have been a pair of snuffers; and so got rid of her, but not of the cutlery plague in general. At Ormes a woman attacked us, saying, with incomparable effrontery, that she had come from an immense distance for the purpose of offering us her merchandise. We said that we were already provided, but she would take no excuse; and two unoccupied post-boys, who were looking on, gave it as their unbiassed opinion that it was a traveller's duty to buy every where, if it were only to stir trade.

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in the midst of her bee-hives. She had been preparing her grandson's supper, she told us; and that being done, had sat down to her wheel to spin till his return. I never saw a more perfect picture of comeliness and cottage comfort, and of wonder, too, at seeing us in her rosemary and gillyflower garden; for no one ever rambled that way, (she said,) except now and then an autumn sportsman. There were no candles burned in the hamlet; when evening darkened, she put by her work, said her prayers, and then went to bed by the last ray of daylight,—in winter at four o'clock, or earlier. What a beautiful conscience the kind old soul must have had!

When we turned away from this pretty, unexpected scene, and had descended twenty paces through the wood, we lost sight of it entirely; and could hardly believe that the close trees, whose branches seemed knit together, hid so many homes in their bosom.

And so, having stepped over from Touraine into Worcestershire, and, as I find on looking about me, stepped back again, I shall pull off my seven-league boots, and repose a little.

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questioning eyes; and, rising above their shoulders, three others of larger growth, who we fancied were English; one gem-like and striking, the others white and doughy. There was something very innocent in the assurance with which they stared at us: a young lady brought up at a *fashionable* establishment would not have done such a thing for the world. But simplicity looks sometimes very like impudence, and precisely because it has not the interual sentiment.

We have now a cheerful and fertile country, delicately carpeted with the tender verdure of the young corn; in the midst of which fine trees, single or grouped, (oaks chiefly,) grow up and give the fields a dressed and park-like air. To cheerful and fertile may, however, be added tame, and as yet monotonous; a little variety makes itself felt as if it was something wonderful: and to-day, when we dropped into an oak dell with a soft sylvan look about it, I thought it almost romance, and could have fancied myself for an instant in one of those Surrey glens that run away from the high roads, and seem all the more lovely for their coyness.

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these old towers, my fancy makes a story for them —*sotto voce*; and then I find another in my memory which displaces it, sometimes pleasantly, at others with unwelcome roughness. But still I say, blessings on those whose true taste preserves old things in their old forms! who leave old recollections in their old niches, and who do not think it necessary to repair, and paint, and decorate, until the very ghosts no longer know their favourite haunts; and, missing the antique and sullen co-louring of time, and the congenial loneliness never before broken in upon by the noise of masonry, stalk off indignantly, taking with them the power which belongs to supernatural associations,—the awe of their possible, or, at least, willingly-imagined presence. For who, in wandering through the old domains of history and romance, would wish to dismiss the thought of their being still tenanted by the unseen spirits of those whose names and deeds lie holily upon them? Who would accept the change of modern finery for the gorgeous dream of imagination, or the necromancy of memory? None, certainly, of meditative mind, into whose deep thought the dead enter; none of

genuine fancy or poetic feeling; for to such those old memorials, twice consecrated—once by time, and once by story,—seem too sacred to be handed over to the profaning touch of beautifiers and repairers.

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blunt as Peter Pindar's razors, or half-a-dozen pair of rigid scissors, to persecute the unfortunate stranger, whose ill-luck may have thrown him in her way. If you stand on a balcony, she will fly up stairs to you; if you get into a carriage, she will fasten on the step,—perhaps jump in, or force you to carte and tierce with her through the window, till in despair you buy off her perseverance, for wear it out you cannot.

At Tours, an humble knock at the door announced, I thought, a conscious intruder. "C'est la petite marchande de l'hôtel," said the waiter. I tried to escape, but could not; and *la petite marchande* pushed in with her awful case of cutlery. I expected, from the introductory *formule*, some tripping thing of sixteen, easily got rid of; when a staid, middle-aged body presented herself, but the tongue was still in its teens, running as if on its first wheels, and alas! no chance of a break down. "Madame must certainly want a pair of scissors, probably a large one; or a very small, or a pocket size: perhaps a knife—a penknife, ivory, tortoiseshell, or mother-of-pearl; or a *jardiniere*, with three blades, a file, and a corkscrew." L——

produced an English one; and *la petite marchande*, turning away sorrowfully, acknowledged with a sigh that English cutlery was the best in the world,—she did not know why; perhaps it was the water; and then she sighed again. I purchased a pair of scissors, which, for the capability of cutting, might as well have been a pair of snuffers; and so got rid of her, but not of the cutlery plague in general. At Ormes a woman attacked us, saying, with incomparable effrontery, that she had come from an immense distance for the purpose of offering us her merchandise. We said that we were already provided, but she would take no excuse; and two unoccupied post-boys, who were looking on, gave it as their unbiassed opinion that it was a traveller's duty to buy every where, if it were only to stir trade.

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and seizing the moment when we stopped before it, mounted upon chairs, (with which they were all previously provided,) and thrust the instruments of

martyrdom into the carriage, with fierce and threatening gestures that belied their petitioning words; while a chorus of voices screamed out "Knives, razors, corkscrews!—a superb pair of scissors for two francs, a magnificent leverette for fifty sous!" Then the scissors at twenty—fifteen—twelve, and the "jolie leverette" tumbling down through the decimals to eight. "Take it for eight," bawled the vendor in a tone of angry despair, "ma jolie leverette!"—it was enough to drive one mad.

Amongst those turbulent matrons—for such they seemed to be, was an elderly woman whose quiet, uncomplaining look interested me: so when we were housed, I beckoned to her from the window; and having talked with her a little, and found her to be (as I had expected) a decent and very necessitous person, put a trifle into her box, for which she appeared extremely grateful. But with a delicacy rare in such cases, would have insisted on my selecting something from her store in return; nor could I disengage myself from her entreaties till I had accepted a small penknife.

It was a pretty trait, and showed a character which neither distress, nor evil contact, could

sharpen into rapaciousness; and which, in a sphere more favourable to its developement, might have expanded into something noble. How many beautiful natures have been crushed by poverty and care, which culture and kindness might have nourished into strength and beauty! This thought brought others, and I condemned myself for having judged the poor scissor-vendors too harshly, without reflecting how severely protracted distress tries, and how often it finally warps, the best instructed and most improved minds.

But an old woman who hobbled up stairs, when we ordered tea, with a skillet in which were deposited five or six spoonsful of hot sour milk, was not so charitably disposed towards them; they were *flaneurs*, she said, who ought to be sent to the house of correction. I thought the word *flaneur* (literally *lounger*) singularly applied to these poor souls: it put me in mind of an Irish beggar-woman, whom I once heard asking alms at a shop-door for "a poor *dissolute* cripple," meaning a deformed baby that she held in her arms. In the last case, the *i. e.* was obviously *desolate*; but the *flaneur* was only "vocal to the intelligent."

We find the Vienne again at Chatellerault, flowing under a handsome stone bridge, and making an agreeable picture. Its smooth surface is covered with country craft. Long boats, of a graceful form with square sails, spread out their whiteness in the evening sun, catching the lights which, intercepted by higher objects no longer, sparkle on the current; while a water-cart, with its patient horse up to the shoulders in the river, and three grey posters knee-deep in a shallower part, lashing at the flies with their long tails, help out a quiet evening scene, transparently coloured; to which the white houses on the oppsoite quay, with their light girdling of vine-leaves, give an agreeable finish.

But the people here are the best part of the picture. Before a blacksmith's shop, that happens to be in front of our windows, a group is at this moment formed, which would give pleasant work to a quick-sketching pencil. Two rough horses, with high-padded saddles, compose its centre; one is held by a woman in the wide-lappeted cap of the country, her smoothly-divided black hair appearing under it, and a bright mixture of blue and scarlet forming the prominent hues of her dress,

A man, who had just dismounted from the other beast,—wild, olive-coloured, and picturesque as a Spanish muleteer, leans against a post; and while the blacksmith's operation is going on, gives a passing word to a venerable elder mounted on a fine mule, and inserted between two well-stuffed bales that swell up before and behind him. His beaver is aristocratically large, his coat pale fawn-colour, waistcoat light blue, and stockings a pure country white. While they talk, the horse is shod; and the woman, springing up like the false Teresa Panza on her steed, throws one leg over the saddle, and fixing herself firmly in the seat, unfolds a large cloth petticoat, split up behind and before, ties it on, and letting it fall over each side, presents the most decent appearance possible.

Charming old carriages; an inappreciable *demi-fortune*,* as large as a town coach and a half, just passes, drawn by a superb mule; and in it a fair creature reading in the midst of five or six others, with a full-blown rose—a natural one—in her hair. Carts, all drawn by oxen; no horses, were they as

* A light landau, chariot, or other family vehicle, drawn by one horse.

plump and mottled as the best ever turned out by Rubens, could become a country cart as oxen do. Horses—fine ones especially, seem misapplied when used for the slow purposes of agriculture: oxen are the cattle of the field, as horses are of the desert, though we have tamed them down to the stall and the harness. Every moment some merry lassie, or grave dame, jogs, by on her mule, the split petticoat thrown scrupulously over her muscular proportions, and a freight of brooms or other household articles strapped behind; for this being market-day, all are purchasers. Two girls on one horse, both very smart and one pretty, with a lappeted matron brown and fierce as a Cherokee chief in the van, trot down the street at this moment; the girls chattering like two plotting magpies, and the matron every now and then turning round her copper-coloured visage to see that all is right, and the green cloth petticoat duly arranged.

To-day, oak-woods and oak-copses, and the park-like air which we sometimes remarked yesterday, and which the fashion of planting single trees in the midst of vast unenclosed fields often gives to this country, continued; hamlets in woody spots,

and châteaux scattered about, and flanked with turrets like an old-fashioned cruet-stand. The high nobility of Poitou are faithful Carlists, and live feudally within their unmodernised domains, in the fond indulgence of hope, or the fruitless one of regret. Neighbour to the Boccage, in position as in sentiment, the lord is still chief; and the vassal faithful and devoted, happy in the protection which he feels ready to repay with life, and proud of his fealty as others of their independence.

I love a cottage, or a farm-house, in the midst of fields, with the corn at the door, and the apple-trees beside it. We saw many such in Touraine; but, generally speaking, single habitations are not much to the taste of the French peasant, who is gregarious, and prefers the stony and stringy village, where the social virtues can be duly exercised; where there are talkers, and listeners, and winter-evening gatherings at one neighbour's or another, till each has provided room, light, and fuel, in his turn. The lonely cottage, (whose simple inhabitants little dream of the romantic fancies awakened by the sight of their rude dwelling,) or the cheerful one, flower-hung and sunny, with the

morning dew sparkling on its thatch, are not the common country dwellings of France, though the last are oftener met with in the part we have recently passed through, than in any other that I can at this moment call to mind. I have talked of cottages, but even the best here are seldom like our home ones, with the garden-fence of hawthorn, and the small garden itself dressed out in stocks and sweet-williams, and the bower of woodbine all clammy with honey-dew, and set round with sober scabious, and that pretty blue flower which may, perhaps, have a gentler name than devil-in-the-bush—the one I used to know it by in my childhood; and the black currant and full-blossomed syringa, whose leaf tastes, as the gammers say, like cucumber.

Yet this is pleasant scenery,—or seems so to us, who, having looked long at pavement and town trees, and put up with the lilacs and laburnums of a Champs Elysées garden, find a charm in the aspect of the country which, like the sense of being to a free and healthfully organized mind, is in itself enjoyment. Besides, where there are no recollections of a higher kind, the eye contents itself with

little, and cheerful mediocrity spreads out its means effectually.

This historical Poitiers (which has no higher reputation now for beauty than in the time of Madame de Motteville, and a very poor one too for cleanliness) is charmingly approached. At one side rocks and woods, with cottages hung about in them, and a wild luxuriance of parasitical vegetation over-running the stony masses; at the other, the Clain gliding through tufted banks and flowery meadows. Thought of the old wars of France and England, and, as matter of course, of the Black Prince, whose wild and gloomy appellation suited the character of the times, and its savage though romantic spirit. I have never been able to make out what there is in this same name, that always makes my fancy bestow the attribute of youth upon its possessor. History talks of forty and some odd years; but I can never push the dark-armoured hero beyond the romantic point of eight or nine and twenty. The sound of the Black Prince never will come to my ear with a grey hair in it. It is the same with Hamlet; but this is a more general feeling, for who ever believed, even on his own

authority—or acquiescence, for he never contradicts the grave-digger,—that he had calendared thirty years; or on his mother's, that he was "fat and scant of breath;" or ever fancied him other than a youth recent from Wittenberg,—thoughtful, philosophizing, sometimes sad, but still the young prince, and almost student: which illusion must be owing to something in his name; for, though it is true that his uncle talks of school, yet so does he himself of three and twenty years ago as of a fresh recollection: so one may be allowed to balance the other, even without the mature additions of fat and shortwindedness.

Saw little or nothing of Poitiers,—little even of its general appearance, and nothing of its Roman relics, its amphitheatre, or other fragments; nothing of its vast cathedral, its ancient churches—Ste. Radegonde, St. Hilaire, and St. John; all (as it is said) exceedingly curious; as being amongst the earliest specimens of sacred architecture; but the church of Nôtre Dame la Grande is deemed the most remarkable. These old churches, in the early *gotico Lombardo* style, or in that which came before it,—simple and even sometimes rude within, but

overcharged externally with statues, bassi relievi, rich tracery, elaborate fret-work, scrolls, foliage, rosettes, columns twisted, fluted, knotted, growing out of the backs of beasts such as Ezekiel dreamed of, are often fuller of interest than the more elegant structures of later times. However, the day being hopelessly wet, and our way merely skirting the town, we have left its sights for a future occasion ;* but it seemed well perched, and to one who, like myself, is a lover of battered old towns and high-spirited recollections, curious and interesting.

About five or six leagues from Poitiers, and on the river Vonne, is the little town of Lusignan, famous once for its castle known in history, and to which the fairy Melusina,—a most remarkable person, at once serpent and woman, daughter, as she is called by some, of the twelve tribes of Israel; or of the king of Cyprus and Jerusalem, as she is styled by others, but always princess and magician,—has given a romantic celebrity; and two

* And another has since presented itself; when its ecclesiastical treasures were pointed out to us by the kindness of the préfet, to whose politeness and intelligence we were much indebted.

leagues from the town are the plains of Maupertuis (no longer however known by that name,) where the great battle of Poitiers was fought, and the king of France made prisoner. There rang the cry of Montjoie—St. Denis! answered by that of St. George—Guyenne! and there did the Black Prince speak so wisely and plausibly to his somewhat disheartened army, (then preparing for the battle,) that they were *reconfortés*. There fell the Oriflamme, and a great spirit with it;* and many thousand valiant men found passage for their souls that day!

The ultra-carlist character of the country, and its vicinity to La Vendée, sharpen the vigilance of the police most provokingly. Such a passport scrutiny as we have to go through at every hamlet! just as if we were the old Bourbons themseves,—we who are as innocent of Charles Dix as we are of Pharamond. Remarked at Couhé some very pretty girls, with oval faces and sparkling eyes; women much better looking than in the Paris direction: no more bulbous noses, but a fine drawn gentility of features, and a soft and very

* Geoffrey de Charney.

agreeable southern colouring. A rich country onwards, wide fields of waving grain; and the most splendid chestnuts imaginable, vying in magnitude and beauty with the oak, and opposing their deep and full-bodied green to the pale transparent verdure of the walnut. Surface agreeably varied with frequent hills, softly wooded in the distance.

Still too near to La Vendée; big looks and blustering every where. At Chaunay, a soldier of the Garde Urbaine, petticoated like a Drury-lane centurion, barred our passage with fixed bayonet, eyeing us suspiciously, and rather as if he had private reasons for believing us dangerous characters. It is impossible to find oneself touching on this country of "the West," without a feeling of respect, even though it may not be one of actual sympathy. There was so much good faith and hearty courage in the old Vendeans of —93, that however opinions may differ as to the merits of the cause, their beautiful devotion to it,—a devotion of sacrifice offered in perfect faith,—must ever be remembered with honour.

Whether the Chouans of the present day are of the same stock, feeling the same intense sentiment

of allegiance, fighting with the same unity of hearts and purpose; or whether, as their enemies will have it, a robber spirit of gain, or an assassin one of vengeance, has in too many instances displaced the original holiness of belief and motive, I am not competent to decide. But the old Vendeans, those brave peasants who had become warriors from faith and love, who left their fields untilled to gird on the sword and follow their lord, or their lord's children, to the battle, were of an undoubted mould. They had never quitted the shelter of their woods, had never been any thing but quiet burghers of the forest; yet went out boldly to fight for the cross of their faith, which their pastors told them was in danger, and for the children of Saint Louis, to whom they had sworn fealty; and whose chief they in their simplicity still, perhaps, imagined giving laws under the great oak of Vincennes with his crown on his head, the holy Evangelist on his knee, and his royal mantle, wrought over with golden bees, on his kingly shoulders.

I am no politician; but I can hardly imagine any one of a fine and admiring mind, however op-

posed its views and feelings may be to the views and feelings which actuated this ardent and primitive people, reading the charming memoirs of Madame de la Rochejaquelin without a sentiment that joins itself to the simple and pious enthusiasm of those new crusaders of the west; or approaching a spot, where the sweet and secluded aspect of nature was fellowed by the pure lives of those who were nursed in its bosom, without lingering for a moment in thought, perhaps in fondness, on its story.

But little of the romance of war now remains; of its parade, however, we have more than enough. Peace is my delight, but the apparel of strife meets the eye every where. Even here at Ruffec, drums rattle, trumpets sound, troops change quarters, préfets compliment commanders, and commanders extol préfets, each sprinkling his oration with a few loyal allusions to keep the next door neighbours in order. A review has just now taken place; and by and by there will be a dinner,—a loyal, patriotic, mixed monarchy dinner, in which of course, as this inn of Ruffec has a high gastronomic reputation, all the produce of the hot

south will be set forth scientifically. In the mean time, the troops defile before Monsieur le Préfet, who nods approbation, graciously overlooking the ill-assorted appearance of the country lads, who have wedged themselves into the ranks in their flapped hats and short jackets,—mountain free-booters rather than soldiers in the outward man, and probably much more like the real William Tell, than the Austrian officer with hessian boots and ostrich feather, who represents that brave peasant, not only at opera-houses in general, but on the walls and sign posts of his own native Switzerland.

And now the show is over: the préfet has made his last speech, and the people, tossing up their hats in the air, shout "Vive notre préfet!" upon which his honour, a natural man I suppose, waves his beaver, and huzzas with the crowd.

In these and similar consolations, (such as they are,) the calamities of war are often forgotten; and though the story which the high-spirited boy hears from his maimed father may be a sorrowful one; or more sad still, the one with which a widowed mother checks for a little while the riotous current of his

young blood, and tames it into not unsweet, though premature staidness, still the drum and the trumpet—and alas! the fringe and the feather, will excite those who have ardour, and seduce those who have vanity. If to defend that which is dear and sacred,—the palladium of liberty or the home of love, so be it,—and may blessings go with them! but if to learn the mysteries of vice and pipe-clay in the barracks of a country town, or wear out life, perhaps lose it, on a distant and pestilential shore, to forfeit the reality of independence, and be flogged out of the sentiment of honour,—better to labour in the fields, and die in peace amongst them.

To all which the answer is, and ever will be this, —there are certain things that must be done, and people must be found, bought, coaxed, or excited to do them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EVE OF ST. JOHN—ANGOULEME—A MITRED MUSE AND A GOSSIPING CHAMBER-MAID—FAMILY CUSTOMS—THE IMITATIVE FACULTY—DESCENT FROM ANGOULEME—CAVIGNAC — FETE-DIEU — TWO SIDES OF THE CANVAS—THE BOUQUETS OF THE FETE-DIEU—THE EFFECT OF THE CEREMONY ON THE MIND—OUR NEIGHBOUR—ANTICIPATIONS — CUBZAC — THE FERRY-BOAT AND ITS CARGO—BORDEAUX AND OLD ITALY.

EVERY house from Ruffec to Angouléme is garnished with green boughs in honour of St. John. There is no saint in the calendar whose fête is kept with such sweet and simple testimonials, as those which custom has consecrated to the eve of St. John,—the patron of shepherds, the particular saint of the valleys and the hills; he who preached in the desert, whose raiment was of camel's hair, and his meat locusts and wild honey. I would not tell to every one all that I think of when I hear the canticle of St. Ambrosius sung by the shepherds; and see the bonfires on the mountains,

or along the still sea-shore, and look at the children dancing round them, and the flames blazing or dying on the sky, or scattering their uncertain fire from some lonesome strand in stars upon the summer's evening sea. The boughs and nosegays, too, tied up in the form of a cross and hung upon the doors to keep the witches out, have something innocent and believing in them that delights my heart; and so do the rustic gatherings—more frequent on this night than on any other of the year, where piety is cheerful, and the young spirit of festivity remembers in the midst of its enjoyment that it is a holy eve,—the vigil of his birth who came to bear record.

As we advance towards Angoulême, we get amongst vines, but not amongst vineyards: there are few regular ones; grain and vines alternate like the stripes of a ribbon. Many small woods and scattered trees, but the fine single ones have staid behind with the god Mars, of whom we hear nothing more at present. The town of Angoulême is next door to the sky. I can only judge of it from the dull specimen of the faubourg in which the Hôtel de la Poste happens to be situated; but I should think it must be finely

placed. It has a view,—a celebrated one, over the valley of the Char, and which all travellers (we are told) run up to see; but as the ascent is out of the question for me this evening, I shall quietly wait the opinion of my advanced guard. Wide and showy, is the report; from which I conclude, that its beauties have more of display than interest, and very possibly may be doing them injustice, for the country is rich and varied, and a soft landscape opens beneath, which the town domineers episcopally.

This word episcopal, which so especially suits those lofty sites, where the cathedral has outlived the castle, and the priest the chieftain, recals to my mind that pious bishop—and afterwards saint—of Angoulême,* who, being also a poet, wrote a certain allegory, entitled *Pipée, ou la Chasse du Dieu d'Amour*; in which Beauty is maid of honour to the Queen of Love, Youth her ambassador, Espoir de Jouir her grand falconer, Hardiesse her counsellor, and Déduit Joyeux her *maître d'hôtel*. The path to her Château de Plaisance is by the Verger d'Amour, the road De l'Espérance,

* St. Gelais, Bishop of Angoulême.

the forest De Gracieux Désirs; but the stag who has run away with her heart, (which he wears on his antlers) lurks in the Buisson de Tristesse. Such were the laudable recreations of a mitred muse in the beginning of the fifteenth century. Nothing, in those good days of the church, was considered unseemly, unless it was heretical; nothing either of speech or action was prohibited to the faithful; while a careless word, or a thought falsely interpreted, ensured to the suspected the honours of the Inquisition. The cathedral of St. Pierre has a high reputation amongst the old churches of France; but I can vouch for nothing but my faubourg,—my knowledge of Angoulême extending no farther. It must have a fine look out, but seems a still place,—no longer the Angoulême of the old rejoicing times when the Black Prince held his court there, with "grand foison de Cheualiers et d'Escuyers;" but it is not without its attractions, and rare ones too, if what a communicative chambermaid who runs in and out much oftener than necessary, informs me be true; for, according to her account, the ladies of Angoulême are singularly beautiful; fresh, too, as May-dew, and

who set the jet d'eau in the garden playing in honour of his arrival, for he had been out all day on duty as a National Guard. When I met her just now, and observed, by way of saying something, that this was a great holiday, she replied, "Oui, Madame, c'est la fête de mon mari," evidently thinking more of her husband than of the saint. I was exceedingly struck with the graceful way in which this loving wife presented her little daughter to me, and with her general manners; good breeding, and even refinement, are very frequently met with in France where one does not exactly expect to find them; but a want of habitual delicacy sometimes surprises one less pleasingly.

There is one faculty very remarkably developed in almost every French woman; and that is, the power of adjusting herself to any change which chance may make in her position. I recollect a foreigner once saying, when a very beautiful girl in humble life was the subject of conversation, "She is able to be a duchess:" almost every young woman in France, who is not of the downright hardworking class, is able to be a duchess, should the opportunity offer; at least as far as the power

to the right; and to the left the town making a stepping-stone to the sky, its girdle of walls supported on rocks, and its rocks on slopes of verdure. Down below, a rich country with soft woody ridges and cheerful fields, in which the sweet, pleasant work of hay-making is going on: as we advance, some pretty bits, and some meagre ones; but the last not often. The meadows, hedges, and single trees, make us think of England; and the flowers that grow in the green nooks and under the looping briars, of many things which

> If present,
> Would be pleasant;
> But being gone,
> Make moan.

Another touch of England:—cows feeding at liberty in the fields, or browsing among the tufts of purple thyme, that glow like amethysts on the banks by the road-side I have often regretted that the sight of cattle, free from the trammels of the girl and the string, should be so rare a feature in French landscape, that when it does present itself it is noticed rather as a remarkable one. I do not mean to say that this is the case in all parts of France, but in many.

June 25th. Arrived at Cavignac (a village and a poste) in the midst of the fête-dieu. Streets strewed with rushes, large nosegays of the showiest flowers, arranged in the form of a cross and attached to every door, reposoirs at decent intervals, and the whole population in movement. As the *grand* reposoir was erected in front of the post-house, we had a full view of the solemnity; and if it lacked the measured pomp and lofty ceremonial which wealth and power confer on the same rite at Paris, the deficiency was more than compensated by the spirit and originality of the picture.

First came the devout women of the village, with stern and reproving countenances; and over their heads shawls so disposed, as to take the fold which the old painters give to the veil of the Madonna. At each side of these holy personages moved a confused crowd of female peasants, each with a very white and very wide cap; on the front of which a handkerchief, largely folded and of the most glowing colours, was laid flatly, so as to advance from the forehead and throw a shade on the face. As the procession approached the reposoir, all knelt down, the women forming a crescent at

each side, and spreading the ground with their ample garments of yellow, dark green, deep azure, and that full matchless red which so brightly vivifies the dress of the French peasant.

At the other side were the men, more closely grouped, old ones chiefly and bald, with clasped hands and believing countenances; simple and pious rustics, whose hearty faith was (I thought) more edifying than the conventional drone of the officiating priests. But the women were the rich bits of the picture, kneeling with their tanned hands clasped together, and their dark, and sometimes very striking faces inclined downwards under the shade of the folded handkerchief. One very young girl, sunned into a rich copper-colour, but with fine expressive features, and a grave devotional air that contrasted singularly with her slim and childish figure, was the very Egyptian Mary of Carravagio. Altogether, the lights and shadows, grouping and effect, were admirable.

But here ended the picture, and the interest; all the rest was profanely paltry. An old man, with two dustman's bells, out of which he struck most inappropriate music, preceded the standard

of the cross; two children followed, dressed like mummers, one holding a toilette pincushion,—though dishevelled,—and otherwise arranged, to image Mary Magdalen; the other, a trumpery glass box, with a sixpenny nativity in wax in it, but evidently, by a fragment of sheepskin pending from the shoulders and a distracted desert wave given to the hair, himself the representative of the Baptist. Then came a rabble of boys, some in dirty surplices, others bare-footed, regulated by a young priest more noisy even than his flock; and enclosing the whole, a double file of patches in their working jackets, with rusty fire-locks on their shoulders. The commander of the faithful alone wore a uniform, and flourished his sword in the teeth of his ragged regiment; the chief magistrate wore a sword also, and a tri-coloured scarf, in which last fashion he was followed by his adjunct, who, being a proper Sancho Panza and sorely encumbered with flesh, could not conveniently kneel, so squatted down on a mound in front of the more supple pietists, like a Mandarin on the lid of a tea-pot.

As to the troops, they had quite enough to do

to take care of their fire-locks and personal safety, without thinking of their devotions; but the commander was edifying. When the ceremony was over, and the Egyptian Marys and Elizabeths, with the women of Endor—for there was more than one witch amongst them—had disappeared; the mistress of the poste and her handmaids, set about stripping the reposoir; and the lady, selecting three of the most effective bouquets presented them to us with a Parisian slope of the body, observing that they had been blessed,—"et cela embellit toujours."

Yet, notwithstanding its occasional paltriness, and more than occasional ostentation, there is something in the fête-dieu—not the town procession, but the village one—which I greatly love. Something so imposing in the measured chaunt, the bells hailing with solemn yet joyful sound the passage of the Host, the clouds of incense mounting skywards like the incense of the heart, the perfume scattered by young and innocent hands before the glittering canopy, the propitiation of prayer, the heart-opening of thanksgiving, the pious abstraction of the aged and the chil-

dren, that I have often—not only felt my imagination affected, but my heart touched by its solemnity. On one side are the old, who stand on the threshold of eternity, and to whom faith is all things; on the other the young, who by their innocence still belong to heaven, both holding fast by hopes and promises sincerely indulged, and devoutly trusted in; but which, in the middle stage of life, are too often slighted and forgotten. Their piety is touching,—there is comfort in it.

Years have passed away since; but I still remember with pleasure the pious bustle of the good folks at ——, when the droning murmur, faintly heard at a distance, deepened into the full bass that announced the approach of the procession; and have not forgotten the cordial feeling which the display of our best carpets on the walls excited towards the English heretics. A Swiss protestant, who was our neighbour, and one of those hard men who "will not give the spirit of God leave to breathe through the pipe it pleases," used to grumble at an act of complaisance, which he (who preserved his carpets as a beauty does her complexion) affected to think a culpable one. To

have closed our gates, or stood at them deridingly, he would have considered far more fitting; but it has always seemed to me, that if we are bound—and that we are, who can doubt?—when we intrude upon the ceremonies of a mosque, or thrust our faces into a Jewish synagogue, to abstain from insulting those rites which others deem holy; how much more incumbent does the observance of decency become in a Christian land, where the same belief lives in all hearts, though the form by which it manifests itself be different! To this our Swiss neighbour would have answered, (having the wear and tear of the carpets before his eyes), that to insult, was one thing; to countenance, another. In law affairs, acquiescence is, I believe, considered as complicity; but in matters of mere benevolent feeling, where neither a great truth or a revered opinion is called in question, the acquiescence of kindness may surely be permitted.

How many anxious thoughts do anticipators give to misfortunes which never arrive! It is an odd fancy that of taking troubles at interest; yet many have it, and love to give it to others who are more hopingly disposed than themselves. Be-

fore we left Paris, we had heard so much of the misery of travelling southwards in the hot months, that nothing but the imperious necessity which compelled our journey, could have prevented us from giving it up altogether.

"Have you ever travelled in summer through the south of France?" was a question always put in a tone of commiseration, and sure to be followed by "such heat!" ejaculated pityingly, with a turn up of hands and eyes, and a specification of evils which there was no possibility of escaping,—exhaustion, inflammation, a daily broil half as hot as a martyrdom, and perhaps a brain fever in perspective. Yet here we are, almost at Bordeaux, after the most delightful journey imaginable, bowling-green roads, cheerful scenery, and such a climate as one might expect to find in the island of Madeira.

This is the 26th of June; and yet there is a freshness in the air, an elasticity, that has a perceptible effect on the mind. I had anticipated a heavy, sultry atmosphere, pressing like lead upon the spirits, or else a sky of fire; but it is vernal, and of itself enough to make one in love with the

south: we have had no dust, and the hedges are as green as when they first budded. Other years may tell other stories, and the southern June may sometimes merit all the fiery tales told of it, but this June (at least the latter part of it) has been one long spring day.

At Cubzac, we found the ruins of a castle three parts demolished—and with man's help, I should think, probably for the materials; but still producing a mellow effect: warm masses of stone, with a luxuriant covering of fig and ivy on some of the stray fragments. Embarked in a ferry-boat to cross the Dordogne, a river here of noble breadth and poor accompaniments, but just as we were pushing off, arrived the *malle poste*, and detained us nearly half an hour, a delay to which the Gascon blood of one of our post-boys could by no means accommodate itself. Some men in office about the boat particularly excited his displeasure, to which he gave such vehement utterance, that his words rushed out four abreast without order of precedence. He asked but five minutes—three would do—to be alone with his adversary, and he promised himself the pleasure of strangling him hand-

somely. But the words were moonbeams compared to the accompanying gestures; every movement was a spasm, every look had half a dozen murders in it: when suddenly, having thrown off his foam and finding himself unanswered, and as he thought unanswerable, he turned like the tide, and ebbed into gentleness.

At length we got off, with a true Murillo beggar, a young Bordeaux shopman who did all he could to sink the counter in a "swashing outside," and the malle poste company. Our ferry-boat was no relation to that

> - - - "fatal and perfidious bark,
> Built in the eclipse;"

but an unwieldy machine, heavy and helpless as a sleeping porpoise, propelled by wheels set in motion by six worn-out horses, blind as Bélisarius and chosen so expressly, who plod on in their eternal circle, all the more tranquilly for not being able to look about them. When we landed, a woman came to us, offering cherries for sale; she had probably been seasoning the marmite, and smelt as thymy as a fillet of veal—country stuffing, with a due mixture of sage and onion; in short, a perfect

plat aux fines herbes, and greatly to the taste of our volcanic post-boy, who ogled her with an air half bold, half tender, that was infinitely diverting.

I have very splendid notions about Bordeaux, and cannot help fancying it (arts apart) something between old Venice and the Florence of the merchant Medicis. This *arts apart* includes, however, on reflection, a terrible deal; and then the prodigious recollections, and their amazing power over the mind,—a power which has outlived the palms and triumphs, yet still perpetuates them. Bordeaux has its high recollections too, heroic, chivalric, and poetic ones; but they have strayed into the vineyards, and been all but lost there. The bold knights of the fourteenth century give way to Guestier or Mackarty, Sir Huon yields to Johnston and Sons, and the house of Barton has effaced Ausonius.

Yet still I have my illusions, though I hardly know from whence they come; for besides the arts and the great glories, which still stick so closely, either in presence or in thought, to the great commercial cities of old Italy, there must be many of these smaller points wanting here which, like the

vase of water on the table, the lily in the lady's hand, the pearl in her ear, or the greyhound on the carpet,—I am speaking of a picture,—catch the light, and by judiciously diffusing or concentrating its power, heighten the general effect, to which they are subordinate ministers. If the people of their great days have passed away from Florence, Genoa, and Venice, the traces, and more than the traces, of their habitation remain. We may traverse their galleries, meditate in their halls, enter into their secret chambers, repose on the very seats where their wisest have thought, and breathe in the identified spots where their noblest have acted. The altars, the palaces, the statues, are still there; and if their women now flutter in French bonnets, un-italianizing as much as possible their fine and characteristic faces, the sweet and sedate mothers of their race still live, benignly gorgeous, on the walls of their fathers' homes.

CHAPTER VII.

BORDEAUX—COUP D'ŒIL—ITS SHOWS—CATHEDRAL—ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH AND CRYPT—THE GIANTS OF BORDEAUX—WOMEN—STYLE OF BEAUTY—DRESS—MY TITIAN—GREEN AND VIOLET—THE QUAYS AT BORDEAUX AND AT PARIS—BEAUTY AGAIN—THE LADY OF BORDEAUX—ITS GREAT MEN.

The approach to Bordeaux is along a plain, calling itself La Bastide, not a thirty-seven leaguer, like the Vega of the Moorish Grenada, but half enclosed by pleasant hills, well studded over with compact country houses, and garnished with vineyards, small shrubby plantations, and flower-knots, just now prodigal of bloom, and in exquisite order. Our first view of the city was a distant one, and too flat to be striking,—I was going to say; but have just recollected that a city, marked out only by its spires and cupolas, standing up in the centre of a vast plain, has often a lordly look, an air of unshared dominion at once proud and lonely; and I have seen towns on the level bank of a river,

its back to the sun, and lying at full length along the flat bank of the river. Besides it is, or seems to me to be, something like the wooden towns which were run up in the Crimea to cheat the Empress Catharine's eyes with a false show of population. The extent is exceedingly imposing, and the coup d'œil strikingly fine; but the backward reach does not seem to me proportionate to the three miles' length; and the gorgeous river decoration, which prepares the mind for the wedged depths of a great and crowded city, appears when looked at from the bridge to be backed like a fine scene in a play, just enough to keep it steady, and afford, through the prescribed openings, the necessary distance. Were it not for the old church and tower of St. Michael, and the fine-drawn spires of St. Andrew, there would be nothing, or almost nothing, visible behind the front screen. But for this want of elevation in the back ground, the coup d'œil would be perfect: a more advantageous point of view might perhaps be obtained from the opposite heights.

I do not mean to say that Bordeaux is not a large city, and a crowded one, but merely that the proportions are not kept—to the eye at least,

in the first general view. There are many very striking things here. Of these the theatre, the great hospital, the préfecture, the fine (though short) street Le Chapeau Rouge, the quays, bridge, river—already named, are the most remarkable. A promising new quarter is now in progress; but there are good things here, too, that are not new, beginning with a fine old cathedral, grim and black, having a rich portal elaborately carved, and six leering bishops niched in it, with whose society I was obliged to content myself while I waited at the porch for my more effective companions. I cannot quote my churchmen as lively company, though there was a thought-exciting power, too, about them, but as friends. O that we could always find living ones that (life excepted) were like them! so safe, patient, secret, and unchanging: and not bad counsellors either;—none are who belong to the past, and convey in an unobjectionable shape its salutary lessons.

The next church on the show list is St. Michael's (very old) with its tower apart, as it sometimes is in Italy. There are others, too, said to be curious from their antiquity, and some fragments of a

Roman amphitheatre, and other relics of the past, but not numerous or, I believe, of high interest. At St. Michael's there are vaults that possess the quality of retarding the progress of decomposition, and within which one who did not fear the shadow of death, remained locked up for hours, noting down by the light of a melancholy lamp its infinitely various aspects of (as he said) "distress, disappointment, dread, misery, and even desperation," in what he calls his book of *sketches*—I of *thoughts*. Then pausing to listen to the retreating steps of the old woman who had consented to lock him in, and to the sullen grating of the door as he closed it after her; and thinking, as he raised his eyes to the grim and awfully-expressive figures that stood bolt upright against the walls,—the cast off garments of the great mystery! horrible in their eyeless, voiceless mockery,—how he might chance to fare, should any accident befal, or cause her to forget him. He had no provision but a piece of bread, and the sight of that startled him,—there were many thoughts, and painful ones, in it; but he worked on, and when the day was past she came again, and let him out of his prison. Among the bodies is that of a

boy supposed to have died of hunger; his hands seem to tear into his side; near to it is one whose last agonies have left the terrible expression of the sardonic laugh upon his hollow features; and another—a woman once, but some hundred years numbered with the dead, whose teeth still glisten! There are awful lessons in this vault, and profound ones, but the sight is distressing; the outrageous, the unpitying, the despairing aspect made permanent, no shade, no light, no softening, always the same dreadful look! If the smile of an angel was to be suddenly fixed and made eternal, it would become at last shocking. Saw the gorgeous portal of the very old church of Sainte Croix encrusted with fret-work, and the richly sculptured one of St. Saturnine,—curious specimens of the old lavish style of sculpture.

Every thing here is on a scale approaching the grandiose, or attaining it: the hospital appears, from its great size to have been intended for the general depôt of all the bodily infirmities of the department. The *within* of a hospital, however beneficent its purposes and wise its administration, must always be a doleful lazar-house; yet still

beautiful in its uses as a haven to the forlorn and the suffering, who there find all the means of relief which care and science can afford; but the *without* is here cheerful and inviting, and the appearance of several sisters of charity, passing in and out under the portico when we stopped before it, gave gratifying assurance that kind, tender, and pious women nursed and comforted the sick,—as such women only can nurse and comfort,—with the moral courage which can subdue disgust, (unconquerable usually but by profound affection,) and the devotedness which a true feeling of religion inspires. In the rosary of virtues, these magnanimous women are the large beads; and the sight of their serene yet active figures, often makes me look into myself with humble and reproving feelings.

But they have taken me away from the giants of Bordeaux just as I was getting within sight of the theatre, which out-giants every thing in its way at Paris. It is now under repair and closed; but judging from its exterior dimensions, one should suppose that the antique mask and mouth-piece might be wanting within. The streets too are unusually broad for a southern town; the cafés, I am

told, make *petits pavillons* of those of the capital, and the houses, though the basement story is often appropriated to the reception of wine-casks, or (as in Naples and some other Italian cities) to the exercise of mean trades, are spacious and handsome; others stand aloof from such unseemly association, and most have the large balconies that break so agreeably the dull monotony of a brick or stone wall. But nothing seems bound together; every thing looks scattered and wildish,—an effect much increased by the quantity of building materials strewn about every where, and by the present whiteness (no rain for six months) of the ground. These disadvantages may be only casual, but they are unpleasantly demonstrative, and greatly spoil the general view.

Bordeaux possesses all the public institutions which should distinguish a town of its importance; a royal college, a royal academy, a library containing many curious MSS.—among others, a copy of Montaigne's Essays, with his own marginal notes; schools of medicine, botany, painting, &c.; and several societies—literary, scientific, and experimental. It possesses, also, a very remarkable

female population. To the casual observer, all the women here seem handsome, many downright beauties, or at least of that showy, spirited, and attractive style of countenance which passes for such at a first glance, though not always at a second. The grisettes of Paris are less striking than those of Bordeaux, but carry themselves more decorously; the leading expression here is galliard, even to boldness; often unpleasantly assured, but sometimes with a mixture of dignity in its assurance that helps to soften it down a little. I dare say they may be very prudent, discreet, industrious women,—household models, perhaps; but to prevent unjust surmises, they should be ticketed on the shoulders like the twelve Virtues, who (according to certain ancient chronicles) slid into the festal hall ready labelled. The style is not a good, though often a grand one: it might not, perhaps, pass muster at Paris,—few things pass in a capital that are not crutched on the modes and manners of the hour; besides, there is something national in beauty that suffers by transplantation. The Roman beauty might be thought stern and unvarying in a Paris ball-room; the Paris one

manièrée and *fade* at a Roman festa: and perhaps the grisette of the Boulevards or the Rue Vivienne,—pretty *à force de toilette*, and conscious as a court beauty, might find the splendour of the grisette Bordelaise vulgar, and her coquetry coarse. Yet it would be difficult to find a larger floating capital,—not of ideal, but material beauty, than in this chief city of the antique Guyenne.

The gay madrass seems purposely invented to aid the effect of a saucy confident figure; it is always of the richest and most vivid colours, and put on here with a degree of coquetry remarkable even in France, where, to make the most of nature's gifts, is never considered heinous. Pale green, orange, and glowing ultramarine, are the favourite colours, but the magic is in the arrangement. I write at my window in full view of one of the most distinguished of these characteristic headdresses that I have yet seen,—colours violet and pale green, tissue rich and glossy, bound round the head an inch above the dark and delicately defined eyebrows, and with one long jetty ringlet framing in the cheek of cream at each side. No bloom, but a fine marble symmetry of features.

and a full tint in the lips. My sketch wants life; it is cold and still, but the original speaks like a portrait of Titian or Giorgone, and in a far different strain of eloquence from those unbreathing semblances which still exist of the immaculate lady, in whose honour green and violet* have been rendered immortal. I do not mean to pass off my chiselled beauty as a specimen of the style general here, which is essentially flesh and blood, a vigorous contrast to all that allies itself with the severity of sculpture, but merely note her down as a fine variety.

At the fall of night, La Rue de l'Intendance echoes to the pattering of feet, like Oxford-street or Piccadilly; but when I look out from my balcony in the morning, I see nothing but the gay madrass, and a few pre-occupied business men walking along the shady side of the street. Now and then a carriage passes, a heavy calèche, or perhaps a hackney coach; but oftener a sledge drawn by oxen almost as ponderous as elephants. The

* The colours of Laura's robe, when Petrarch first beheld her in the church of St. Claire, at Avignon. For a long time after his eyes saw nothing but green and violet.

fashionable quarter, in all towns the dullest in summer, and often the least original or amusing in any season, is still as death; the quays lively, though not even there does the bustle exist which I expected; and the port is now far from containing

> " Plus de barques et de vaisseaux,
> Qu'aucun autre port de la terre,"

as La Chapelle tells us it did in his time. No approach to the pressing, elbowing, urgent turmoil which characterises the London business-streets; nothing like the full tide of life that rolls through every channel of that jammed and choking city, which may well be called the world's mart.

But here the quays, thronged or otherwise, form a noble feature; we have none, which, with such a river as our magnificent Thames, is a crying sin. In Paris the Seine is but a thread; but what quays! what picture! what architectural effect and harmonious combinations of form and colouring! Who ever passed over the Pont des Arts for the first, or perhaps the fiftieth time, without pausing to look admiringly,—first upwards from the line of palace and of wood which runs along the river to the hills, then downwards through the fine

vista of castellated-looking houses, varied in form, rich in colouring, emerging, retreating, dividing, narrowing, with all its story, and all its marvellous clearness, shade, and splendour, and its remarkable air of stationary calm; an effect probably produced by the long-retreating avenue of fixed objects through which the eye is led, not by a street thronged with fluctuating crowds, banishing by the rapid circulation of life all character of quiet; but by a slow river, rarely animated (at this part of its stream) even by casual movement. This effect* is even still more remarkable from the Pont Royal, where the fine scenic view of the Pont Neuf, and the retreating lines which divide and fly off from it, being farther removed from the eye, lose in distance whatever movement may belong to its nearer points, and aided by the wonderful transparency of the atmosphere, assume that peculiar air of living stillness which characterises a finely executed panoramic painting. Looked again on the river and its

* Now very much spoiled by the new bridge, which interrupts the run of the eye, and divides the river into bits most vexatiously. It is a utility, and a great one; and I am obliged to think of this whenever I look across it.

fine accompaniments, and then walked along the gallery that runs through the interior of the bridge, —I should say galleries, for there are several; by means of which water may, if necessary, be conveyed from the river to the town, and the state of the bridge examined and repaired without interrupting the circulation of carriages. Never saw any thing more exquisite than the light on the aëreal spires of St. Andrew, as we came again above ground; they looked like consolidated vapour, of a pale grey blue, and perfectly diaphanous.

Here is not the same pictorial effect as at Paris, but there is great extent,—a splendid river, shipping enough to give interest, though not (just now at least) to equal expectation, lofty and spacious buildings, good colouring, and considerable movement. Nor should the green hills be forgotten which form the opposite bank of the Gironde; and when its surface is crowded with masts, and its quays with busy people, must afford a soft and grateful repose to the eye, fatigued with the pushing, jostling, and confusion of a trade port. An unusual proportion of women on the quays, standing about, or sitting before the doors, with

their peculiar air of Montserrat or Honduras. Complexion apart, the humbler class of females here are quite creoles;—the easy shape, disengaged air, and love of glowing colours. Had Yarico, instead of sea-shells and coral-branches, worn a madrass, she would have tied it on as they do: Brunetta,* I am sure, did so. But the complexion is usually soft, pure, and brilliant, but with now and then a variety that approaches to the warm tinting of the isles. †

The most magnificent creature I ever beheld was a lady of Bordeaux; and while I write of beauty, her charming form seems to rise up before me, giving sweet help to my thoughts, and filling my mind with pure remembrances. I was very young when I saw her, and full of childish fancies about things that looked like angels; and then she

* Vide *Spectator*.

† *Note at Bordeaux on a subsequent visit.*—The gay madrass has tumbled down a foot, and it strikes me that the general air of beauty has tumbled down with it. Low caps (Charlotte Corday's) and full blown faces, or handkerchiefs slatternly flattened, are the order of the day—perhaps of the police, as far as the head-dress is concerned; for the people in France rarely change their costume voluntarily, and each provincial town or district has one of its own.

came and gave my dreams a beautiful consistency. I have never forgotten her amazing loveliness,—amazing even in its retiring sweetness; and when other beauties have raised a moment's wonder, she has come like the evening star, effacing (yet as if unwillingly) their paler light by her pure lustre.

Our ideas of French Venuses are usually taken from Mignard's beauties, who all look as if they were rouged; or from Lely's goddesses, the brilliant ornaments of our second Charles' Frenchified court, whose large, pulpy figures, even eye-brows, and velvet eyes, seem to us all of the Montespan family. But my incomparable Bordelaise was of another order of beings, millions of miles above all toilette influence; yet not the rainbow-phantom of a love-sick poet, but a sweet and wife-like woman, innocent and majestic as Milton's Eve, with a serious earnestness of look, and a young bloom lighting up her exquisitely chiselled features. I shall never forget her, and feel myself looking about here for something that might seem as if it belonged to her beautiful blood.

Montaigne is buried here; that wise Michel Sieur de Montaigne, who makes thinkers of his

readers; that pleasant Michel de Montaigne, whose racy freshness would keep his works alive and new for ever,—if there was a for ever for the works of man. Montesquieu, too, was of this neighbourhood, and inhabited a castle a few leagues off. Such names give permanent interest to local habitation; the immortality of mind is on it, the surviving spirit still stirs within it, outliving life: the tree has been scathed, it is prostrate and withered, but we still feed upon the precious honey that is enclosed within its hollow.

The house in which Montaigne lived is said (or known) to be No. 17, Rue des Minimes; its having been so distinguished is, as we are told, unindicated by any outward work. The memory of Montesquieu is more honoured at his Château de la Brede, where the chamber in which he habitually studied is religiously preserved in the same state in which he left it. Every foot of this ground is English history, as the shades of the Talbots and the Black Prince testify. And wars more recent and more terrible,—civil, revolutionary wars, the exciters to all crimes, and developers of all virtues, have left (blood-written) in the annals of this department a

treasure of fine and touching recollections,—noble and affecting records of the fate of some of the most devoted and interesting victims of those great, bad times, when the will was gospel, and the guillotine law.

For were they not great and bad? Great in the amazing instances they afforded of public virtue and individual heroism in their purest, most glorious, and most exalted sense; bad in many ways, and in none more than in the wicked abuse of holy words to atrocious actions, perverting minds by the perversion of language, and using the sublime speech of virtue to excite the ardent, and abuse the weak into the commission of crime.

This evil still remains; so does a portion of the good,—great deeds and great views; some on record, others in action,—none forgotten.

CHAPTER VIII.

BORDEAUX, CONTINUED—THE DRAMA—THE TABLE—COQUETTES—WINES AND LADIES—BORDEAUX TO LANGON—THE GREY PARROT AND THE OLD NUN—FRENCH PEASANTRY—LANGON—THE CHAMBERMAID THERE—A LOVE STORY—THE EVENING LIGHTS—YOUNG FANCIES—THE GARONNE—FOREST SCENERY.

We have little music in the streets at night, which in this summer season surprises me; for warm climates engender indolence which music gratifies, and fosters that spirit of gallantry which makes sweet sounds its medium. But the absence of music from the streets is no proof of the absence of its sentiment,—witness Italy. Music is probably cultivated here, as it is in all wealthy and luxurious places; but whether in a feeling of its beauties or its difficulties, as a high enjoyment or a refined accomplishment, a stranger like myself has no means of ascertaining. Report speaks more decisively as to a less ethereal taste; and if it speaks truth, the

science of cookery is a study here, and a good table the chief enjoyment of the Bordelais after his day of occupation.

A taste for dramatic representations would seem to be general also, if a judgment might be formed from the size and splendour of the theatre, which is esteemed one of the finest in Europe. It is handsomely isolated, and presents a façade which *David* would have snatched at for the back-ground of one of his hard historical pictures: it has the broad steps, the columns, the ranged statues,—all that is necessary to throw his senators, centurions, lictors, plebeians, (I have them all before me on a chimney-board at this instant,) out from the canvas. The actors are reputed excellent, and probably merit their reputation; for, when tragedy is put out of the way, French acting is always perfect: it is nature faithfully and delicately portrayed, with a nicety of shading that fixes by a touch, and a complete absence of that coarseness and exaggeration which is often thought, and always falsely, to constitute the natural when it only gives emphasis to the vulgar.

I say when tragedy is out of the way, in a very English feeling; I am aware of this: for whether

right or wrong, we can never be brought over to French tragedy, or (with the exception of the immortal Talma, who broke through rules) the French mode of acting it. We allow that the tragedies of Racine, considered as dramatic poems, are eminently beautiful; but as transcripts of the nature and passions of man, and of all that is born of that nature and of those passions, they are, at least to our perceptions, cold and often speechless. So are most of the classical French tragedies; and when I think of them, I sometimes cannot help wishing the illustrious family of Agamemnon extinct.

The French are even with us. They do not love Shakspeare; but neither do they hate him as Voltaire and Frederick of Prussia did: indeed some have come over to his side, and learned to feel and acknowledge his infinite and amazing power. I once heard a young man say, "les petites demoiselles de Shakspeare;" but he knew better things afterwards, and had the good sense to confess it. However, many still believe that Monsieur Ducïs is Shakspeare; while others, (as I have already said,) have lifted up a corner of the curtain, and discovered the true Demetrius.

The theatre is closed at present, and the actors

dispersed on leave of absence. But the other luxury of Bordeaux has no furlough. All who delight in scientific and bile-provoking compounds, know that the south of France is the great larder of the capital; but Bordeaux, being itself fountain head for some things and next door neighbour to others, has the first right of selection, and uses it. In the south, the exquisite pale truffle of Provence is turned to meet account; and from thence all that gratifies the palate under the comprehensive shape of *pâté* is sent abroad into the world, led on by the sublime *pâté de foie gras*, (disputed, I believe, by Strasbourg,) and followed by the crowd of minors that come thronging on its back, as the little rivers do on the great Nile in the Tuilerie gardens.

Who has not heard of, even if they have not tasted, the unsophisticated oil of Provence, pure and colourless as water; the poulard truffé of Périgord; the unbrandified claret of Bordeaux; the liqueurs of Marseilles; the nougat * of the same

* The nougat is a sort of cake composed of filberts, pistachio nuts, the kernels of the pine cone, and Narbonne honey.

emporium; the oranges of Hyeres; the muscat of Lunel; the ortolans, quails, verdiers, bec figues,—the legions, in short, of winged things that sport in their world of air one moment, and make exquisite *brochettes* almost the next,—the olives, figs, anchovies, almonds, fruits dried and preserved, in jelly, *en compote*, in brandy and out of it,—and other countless delicacies which please and corrupt the palate in this gastronomic land. Miracles are performed (they say) under the shape of entrées and entremets in this identical city of Bordeaux, whose Medicis, though they may not live in quarried palaces like the merchant-princes of old Italy, probably know of many things of which the Cosmos never dreamt.

Did even the Romans in their costliest banquets? I have little antiquarian lore; but if the tongues of singing-birds, and the brains of peacocks, and lampreys that died a natural death in the warm hand, were amongst the prime delicacies of the table,—as well dine with frogs, or make one at a grasshopper's feast, as sup in the hall of Apollo.

We had a small fish (the *royan*) highly esteemed here, served to us to-day. It is of the sardine

family, or perhaps the sardine itself, and should be eaten perfectly fresh. Ours were so, the waiter vowed; but we detected a slight salting, which rather impaired the daintiness of the flavour; or, as I once heard a person say, when speaking of a peach steeped in Madeira, abstracted from its singleness.

If it be true that the manners of one class of society may be taken as vouchers for those of another, the ladies of Bourdeaux must be most accomplished coquettes. I never saw so much flirtability in action, as may be met with here at every corner: from the air of effrontery mixed up with it, the finer spirits are of course exempt. My beautiful Bordelaise was the incarnation of modesty, and so little a coquette, that her house (it was affirmed) did not contain a looking-glass. Whether this pattern of sweet austerity be rule or exception, the ladies of Bordeaux best know.

I never taste wine; so, as I cannot laud it gratefully, have neither hymned La Fitte, Haut Brion, or Château Margaux. Neither have I touched upon the *comet* vintage, which so many have glorified; for not being sure that wine is a

general benefit, and knowing that to myself it is any thing but a particular one, I have thought it as well to remain silent, and let others expatiate on the necessary sandiness or stoniness of the soil; discuss the education of the vine; decide whether its fruits should be crushed by hands, or by feet; or resolve the more important question of the use, or misuse, of brandy in correcting what lovers of port call the insipidity of unsophisticated claret; or making a hot inflammatory wine of it, whether it will or not.

No ladies have I seen at Bordeaux,—nothing but a huddle or two of women cronying in the street, whose silk capotes, or straw bonnets, indicated their wearers to be a few notes in the scale above the madrasses,—that is, in rank but not in beauty. Dreams of Titian, Giorgone, and Vandyke,—of Florentine, Venetian, and Genoese ladies, I leave you to be realized by others more fortunate than I have been; others who have leisure to wait for a winter ball, and if they be of the harder sex (we, it is well known, are always called the softer) courage to risk their hearts in its allowedly dangerous atmosphere.

Garden-houses, and gardens without houses, at least visible ones, decorate the suburb by which we left Bordeaux. A sea-port look about the country dwellings, and a green parrot, or other foreign bird—the well-known love-token of the sailor, hanging out in its gay cage from many a cottage casement. Whenever I see one of those gaudy strangers suspended from an humble window, I always think of the faithful heart that remembered the home love, or perhaps the fond mother, on the far-off, burning shore. But what does the poor green parrot think of, in its brass wire prison with gilt balls? Does the leafy branch, which some gentle hand has laid upon his cage to shelter him from the vertical sun, recall his forest home? or has it been quite forgotten in the grog and flip, the blustering oaths and rattling canvas of the West Indiaman, or the African trader? Who knows?—not the wisest.

I saw a parrot once at Blackwall, with a wreath of barberries in berry round his cage, and a crown of the same, woven probably by the fingers of some loving and fanciful maiden, above it. Poor thing! it was a grey parrot, and cried, Poor

Poll! at the top of its voice with such a melancholy scream; and then, Pretty Poll! with such a gibing, yet cracked and forlorn tone, that nothing could contrast more pitiably with its berries and its crown of vegetable coral than its sad-looking self; winking dolefully, and eyeing with a sort of disdain that might have had memory in it, the wire balloon suspended over the grave, grey head; and in which it was meant that the poor bird should swing as if it had been a cradling bough. But such was not its intention, for it stuck stiffly to its perch, looking, in the midst of its barberries, like an old nun on the day of a banquet in the refectory:—fresh flowers, tied up as if by loving fingers, blushing at one side; piled sweetmeats, glistening in sugar, at the other; comfits, coriander, carraway, and almond, scattered with lavish hand, and the green angelica setting off the tawny orange; novices caught in the snare, and entranced in devotion, fragrance, and lollypops,—but the old nun, who knows what it is all worth, grim and grey in the midst of it, like the poor parrot.

A light, sandy soil, excellent (they say) for vines, but tormenting enough to travellers, who

are covered with dust at every breath of air that stirs its powdery surface. By and by we shall be in the Landes, and then we shall have a bushel for every grain, and perhaps, if any one were to put us in mind of the green hedges &c., of which we made affectionate mention three days ago, we should believe them dreaming. Thus goes life: we build, pull down, assert, retract, grow wise sometimes, sometimes humble; but with every *sometimes* find ourselves a shade less buoyant than in those charming days when we took all things on trust, our own good qualities among the number. All which has nothing, or at least very little, to do with the state of the roads.

A populous and highly cultivated country to Langon; with pleasant-looking groupes of country folks passing along the fields, becoming their fine promise of grain and grapes, and each setting off the other. The squalid labourer, with his care-worn wife and ill-fed children, working a soil profitless to them, but made productive by their toil, is a melancholy sight; and when it meets the eye, one cannot help grudging the harvest of their labour to the absent or hard-hearted master. But

when those who cultivate the earth enjoy a share of its abundance, the compact between the sinews of wealth and of man becomes a mutual benefit; if the granaries of the master are full, the humbler barn of the labourer is not empty.

Generally speaking, there is a gratifying absence of palpable distress amongst the peasants of this country, and a presence of—not exactly what we should call comfort, but of cheerful content, which shows that if they do not possess the former according to our notions of it, they do according to their own. In a country decidedly agricultural as France is, the labourer seldom wants employment; and whatever may be the fraction to which land divided and subdivided may come at last, the immediate effect of the law, which makes the parent's will and divides it equally among his children, is to create a feeling (and to a certain degree a reality) of independence, favourable to character, and consequently to happiness.

The French peasant is usually a small proprietor, living on a bit of land which, however limited, is his own; a portion, perhaps, of the lot of confiscated property which, in the old revolutionary

times, his father may have bought for next to nothing. He is not rich enough to be idle, but still has a certain prop to back his industry; if he has no other patrimony, he has at least that of sobriety. The habit of intemperance is very rare in France: the husbandman's small means are not swallowed up in brutal and individual indulgence, but go to supply the wants of his family; and he must be out of luck if his wife is not a hard-working body, a plain country woman wearing the same clumsy cut of garment that her great-grandmother did before her,—gay in it too, at proper seasons, and if necessary, gorgeous; but brisk and industrious, as French women usually are in the active classes of society, and a cheerful contributor of her quota to the general stock.

A neat inn at Langon, so we have stopped to sleep. The Garonne bathing the fields and vine-yards, and flowing gently under a new bridge, which has just been pronounced the finest in the world by a gipsy chambermaid; who, taking advantage of my being alone, has placed her wild black eyes opposite to me, and opened a battery of words from which it is useless to think of escaping.

In vain I write: her tongue runs faster than my pen; her eyes fasten on me with a look of loving ferocity; and the idea of being in the way no more occurs to her, than it would to a crown-princess, if it pleased her royal highness to interrupt the occupations of one of her ladies in waiting.

According to her account, Bordeaux is nothing in point of luxury to Langon; plain people come here from thence to learn politeness, fine people to practise it in a more congenial atmosphere. "Quelle luxe! (she exclaims) quelle gloire! et les belles demoiselles—les jeunes gens charmants! ah, la fière jeunesse!" and so she goes on gasconading about balls and operas, taste and gaiety; till, pausing suddenly, and rolling her extraordinary eyes as if she was going to predict some horrible fatality, she shoots off, with sundry Pythic contortions and wild looks that solicit questioning, into a disastrous story of two lovers of Langon:—so, as she will not let me write, I lay down my pen and listen.

She has certainly never read Shakspeare, nor yet Luigi da Porta, and probably knows no more of Verona than of

"Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can;"

and yet the opening of her story had much of the old Italian novel about it; only the Capulets of Langon were more vigilant than those of Verona, and so the young wooing was speedily brought to an abrupt conclusion, the youth banished, and the maiden watched, apparently to very little purpose. The lover went to Bayonne, and from thence (as my informer thought) to the end of the world. He was many years away; and when he returned with bettered fortunes and a faithful heart, still true to the image of her who was its early love, he found her worse than dead,—a wanderer from the paths of innocence, a lost and lonely thing, cast off by the virtuous, spurned by the severe, but more than ever beautiful. Time had used him more roughly, for he was changed out of all traces of his former self, and she who had loved no longer recognised him. The memory of sympathy was gone, and the instinct of the heart with it.

An intense desire to guard her from the further perils of her forlorn state, to be near her who had no other friend, who had made herself alone in the world, took possession of his mind. He engaged himself to her as a servant; obtained

her confidence; and she, not knowing whom she spoke to, would sometimes talk to him of the lover whose loss had driven her to despair, and then to worse wretchedness; for even in despair there is depth below depth, and in the last and deepest abyss—guilt! blacker than all beside. And here my strange narrator stops, nor can I in any way induce her to continue. "It is too terrible," she says, with a forced stage shudder, "too terrible to be told;" and really, notwithstanding the curiosity she contrives to excite, I begin to think, that what with her wild way of telling it, and her wild eyes fixing one as the interest strengthens, it may be so from her lips. But a voice of authority calls to her from below, and she leaves me to piece together the broken threads of her melancholy narrative, as my musing fancy wills, though evidently vexed to be whistled off just as she had begun to inform me that she was not a servant of the inn, but rather a chance visitor, who condescended to help, but who lived habitually in a city (name unknown—Damascus perhaps, or Bagdad) where things are on a very extended scale of magnificence.

After all, I have not the least doubt that she was herself the fair—or rather brown, inventress of the whole romance, which probably came as glibly to her lips, as the look of surprise did to her countenance when I urged her this morning to go on with her story. "What story?" she exclaimed, seeming not to understand me; then, after a moment's pause, dashed off with a mysterious air, as though she herself had been the unfortunate heroine, which perhaps, in her insane coquetry, she wished me to believe.

Strolled down after dinner to the boasted bridge, which we found unexpectedly handsome, and on our suspension plan. The sun had set, but while one half of the sky was wrapped in the gloom of twilight, the other half still glowed in the rich amber spread which it had left behind. At one side of the bridge the eye followed a long reach of the river, with the yellow light of evening concentrated upon it, flowing through banks already dark and indistinct; and then, turning to the other, rested on the dim current—there out of the influence of the western light, which bathed the base of the old church, and of the buttressed and ivied

walls that seemed to make part of it. Beyond the church, a line of houses pleasantly placed and coloured, took the air of a fishing village, and before it lay a crowd of small boats at anchor, gently swayed by the ripple of the waters.

In such a light every scene is lovely, no matter how trivial be its features. All day long the sun is high above us; at night the stars and the pure moon have a heaven of their own, to which we look up reverentially, but distantly; but at the last hour of the day, the sky seems to come down to our earth, whispering mysteries, touching it—as in fond fellowship—with its last glow; and in its sweet confidences making itself almost one with our familiar world.

While we enjoyed this placid evening picture, the passage-boat steamed up from Bordeaux, and throwing off its smoke with a whir-r, discharged its red, blue, and yellow cargo (for the women are lost in their all-effacing colours) on the strand. Were I to come this way again, I think I should prefer the river to the road: the last has no peculiar interest, but the river flowing at the base of a line of gentle hills, varied with pleasing, though

not perhaps striking objects, may have some food for the fancy in it. Besides it is the Garonne, which should go for something; and the opportunity of mixing with the people of the country for something (I think) also.

"On the pleasant banks of the Garonne, in the province of Gascony—" It is thus that a potent enchantress opens the most powerful of her stories. This simple line presents a quiet image to the mind, which, like many other quiet images, affects it sometimes more than elaborate ones. It is, perhaps, the mixture of foreign sound and home feeling that makes it poetry to the fancy, though it may be prose to the eye; be this as it may, it has helped to turn many a young head, and has sent some to the warm and teeming south, who have not found it all that the lady of the wand had made it out to be. I remember when I was under the spell, and when the sound of the south of France, or the name of *Bordeaux* on the stern of a vessel, were charmed words, bringing with them a confusion of fancies, which the reality has set in order somewhat prosaically. Yet the first impression

still remains, and the word *pleasant*, so happily chosen, always seems to me written on the landscape.

As yet I have seen nothing loftier written on it. What the Garonne may be in the Spanish valley of the Pyrenees, where it first makes acquaintance with daylight, I do not know, but shall, I hope, presently. Here it is a gentle river, broad and pure, with some tiny rock-work about it, but hardly enough to contrast the tufted foliage that sometimes hangs from its crevices, or break it into little pictures. It has no marked features: a cluster of trees, with an Italian-looking house peeping through them; a group of monumental cypress making way for itself, and standing alone amidst gayer society; a meadow, a stripe of yellow strand; a bringing together of quiet images simply—not meagrely, arranged in the uncrowded way which those great painters, who took a tree, a pool, a bank, and made immortal pictures of them, loved: but nothing to hinder another who might love nature too, though after a different fashion, from calling it all barren, especially should he chance to see it on a dull day.

There were two steamers from Bordeaux at anchor, full as bee-hives, and making the little quay look lively, but not town-like. No demand here for stockings, and not much for shoes; but the women pretty, and aware of it. Langon is famous for its *vin de Grave:* every town here is famous for something that flatters the palate. An indifferent road, dust and pavement, frequent pine woods; and, in the intervals between them, an enclosed country, golden grain, and haycocks diffusing their pleasant fragrance.

And now we are in the Landes, which (here at least) have much less character and more colouring than I expected. As we descended towards the sandy tracts, a fine forest-stretch broke upon us. To me a wide extent of forest has an inexpressible charm; I rejoice in its depth, its darkness, its solemnity, and the frequent and high-toned poetry of its lone recesses. There are so many secrets in its bosom; such volumes of thought and fancy in its silence and in its sounds,—in the odours that breathe from the leaves, the bark, the grass, and from the wild-flowers that seem to bloom for us

alone, and whose perfume, like a strain of sweet and well-remembered music, unlocks the past, and quickens its monumental effigies into life. O the past! the past! how often do we think it dead and gone, when it lies hidden in a fold of the heart, from which even the fragrance of a flower can draw it out again!

CHAPTER IX.

THE LANDES—AN AMERICAN SOLITUDE—THE COTTAGE IN THE LANDES NOT THE TRUE DESERT—ROQUEFORT—AIRE—MY DECANTER-STOPPER—PARADISE LOST AND MONT DE MARSAN—DOING ONE'S DUTY—A GHOST—SOMETHING FOR NOTHING AT AN INN—PINE FORESTS—THE LANGUAGE OF TREES—DREAMINESS—PETTICOATED CATTLE—DRESS—MAIZE AND DUST—THE PYRENEES—VICINITY TO SPAIN, ASSOCIATIONS AWAKENED AND THEIR NECROMANCY—VALLEY OF PAU—PAU AND OLD BEARN.

As we wade through the sands, I look about for the flying shepherds, but see no stilts, or (as far as we can judge) any necessity for them. Nothing that a sabot, or even a naked foot, might not plant itself in with safety; winter, however, may and probably does make such things needful.

These sandy tracts are divided at intervals by woods of oak or pine, and sometimes by delicious meadows, that look as if they had run away with their neighbours' verdure, to spread it out on their own sweet bosoms. In the midst of the sands we

find now and then, and much oftener than we expected, a cottage that realizes—not the reality probably, but our fancy-pictures of the back settlement dwelling in the forests of America: a dream which, with the red men, and the wild beasts, and the night alarms tacked to it, is not without its bad bits, but whose life of active lonesomeness, or family love-bound labour, has a fine aroma of thought, and love, and freedom in it. Felling trees, clearing unhealthy ground, hunting wild game for food, is bitter work sometimes; hard, dangerous, ungrateful toil: but the distant visionary hears only the sound of the axe in the forest, a sound than which no other yields a fuller start of thought, of remote and primeval images,—or the report of the far-off gun, another sound of man's invention,—but full of woodland scenes and wild ones, and boundless prairies, and winged legions that fill the air with life, and all the solitude and action of a primitive nature.

How often have I, who never crossed the Atlantic, gathered together the members of the patriarchal family after the labour of the fields and woods, heaped the pine logs on the bright hearth, and

drawn them all round the well-earned and cheerfully-enjoyed supper: the memory of the old home, the mother-land, crossing perhaps the mind of the aged with tender thought; the young belonging to the wilds, and happy in them. It is thus that fancy pictures the forest settlers; or it takes a solitary but loving pair, grown old in the spot which when young they had cleared to build their cabin on,—their cabin in the wilderness, where the stranger seldom comes, but when he does is welcome: such a pair as Lord Edward Fitzgerald, in the dawning day of his beautiful spirit, describes with such touching poetry of feeling sitting before the door of their forest hut at twilight; or the ancient couple, who, gliding together out of life, still thought of Scotland, and sang "Sae merrie we twa ha' been" at the evening hour, as the Abbé Morellet (I think it is) tells us.

But I have strayed away from my cottages in the Landes,—each standing on its own fresh lawn, entirely detached from any other habitation, within a grove of spreading oaks that might become merry Sherwood, or old Windsor. Close to each cottage is a circular well, with buckets suspended on its

beam,—a garden feature that cools the pulse a little, though not so effectually as a fountain or a bubbling stream. It is probably the frequent mention of the well in holy writ, that makes the sight of one recall unfailingly to my mind the sacred volume, with its desert images and infinite grandeur; the thunders of its poetry, and the serious sweetness and inimitable simplicity of its domestic narrative —poetry too, and of the most beautiful kind. There are no fragrant balsams here, nor palm, nor cedar; nor are the women's eyes in the least like the "fish-pools of Hebron;" but there is a soft colouring of shared—not desolate—solitude about this land, that has something of the sentiment of scriptural poetry in it. As for the women, a fairer never gleaned in the fields of Boaz, or came with her sheep to the "well's mouth," than one who at this moment loads her mule at the door of a cottage by the way side: Hebrew too of aspect, but the sometimes harshness of the Jewish outline fined off,—Rebecca as she sat to Walter Scott, or the Rebecca of the book of Genesis, when she gave water from her pitcher to the eldest servant of the house of Abraham. Indeed, the chance speci-

mens of the population which we have lighted on in this best bit of the Landes, (of the sandy part of it, I mean,) have been decidedly favourable ones, becoming their pleasant habitations, which, were they roofed with wooden tiles instead of red ones, would resemble in many points the charming chaumières of Switzerland. The sloping roof advances beyond the entrance, leaving the house behind it something in the Swiss way, and forming a cool and spacious shed, of which the inhabitants seem to understand all the advantages; for the women ply their distaffs, and the children gambol under its pleasant shade all the day long, playing at bo-peep with the sun, and looking enviably safe from its molestations.

Altogether the Landes are far less dreary than we expected. Wherever there are woods, and sometimes where there are none, the ground is thickly carpeted with fern,—that lover of barrenness, whose large feathery leaf yields to every breath of air, and refreshes the senses by its bright verdure and fanning movement. Long lines of pine trees sometimes streak the verge of the horizon, letting in the sky through their boles like the gleaming

of the summer sea. Even in many of the most barren tracts, an exquisite red heath brightens the parched surface; and wherever the soil seems reclaimable by care, there are dwellers on it.

But we are not in the real heart of the Landes, only on the selvage of the desert,—the embroidered corner. It is towards the sea* that the earth assumes the Arabian aspect which travellers have described, and the scene becomes wide, and drear, and desolate as the waste "towards Diblath;" or a piece of the great and terrible wilderness taken up by the spirits of the air, and laid down upon an eider-down nature that has yielded to its effacing pressure. Here is too much habitation and vegetation for a true desert scene,—indeed there is no approach to it; and though, as we drive along, the carriage sometimes rocks in the sands like a ship in a storm, and the road is floored with trunks of trees laid parallel with each other, still we feel ourselves as if cheated out of the full complement of dreariness on which we had counted, and miss the perfect originality of character which (forgetting that our route was the post—and not the desert one)

* Les Landes sauvages.

we expected to find giving additional raciness to the charming old superstitions, ceremonies, and legends, which are said to be still in customary observance and simple belief among the people of the Landes.

Roquefort,—not of cheese celebrity, is pleasantly lifted up, with a pretty stream winding in and out under rocky banks. Passed through Aire, and should have forgotten it, but for the somewhat unusually steep ascent on quitting the town: the whole contents of a seminary* were poured out upon it,—priests (or the materials for them) enough to supply missionaries for half the globe, and do home duty besides,—at least so it seemed to me; but my maid, who is a calm calculator, could only make out fifty-eight, while to my eyes they seemed grouped by hundreds; but the steep road, and a refractory horse inclined to jib, may have acted as multipliers.

Once upon a time, (and a long time ago it was,) I had contrived to possess myself of a cut-glass decanter-stopper, and I can never forget the amusement I used to find in standing on a chair at the

* A *séminaire* means in France, a college for priests only.

end of a long room, and looking through my stopper at the lights that burned on a table in the middle of it; nor the rapture with which I beheld two candles multiplied into as many hundred rainbow flames. In the present case fancy, fluttered by a little fear, was my decanter-stopper; for even when I shut my eyes, there they were—my elements of priesthood—floating in a kind of black dazzle, like the dark spots that dance before me after too much gazing at the sun.

Market-day somewhere: road thronged with cattle,—horned and otherwise; pigs numerous and squeaking; and geese—I was going to say,

"Thick as autumnal leaves,"

&c.; but it will not do to quote from that divine book among the geese, and at Mont de Marsan. Never was any thing like the human part of that immortal poem. I have been reading in it to-day, and with the deep delight which I always feel when its amaranthine words are open before me. Never was the holy dignity of wedded love, the mutual and entire confidence and sweet communion of two natures, both ignorant of evil, and kindred still in purity with the angels with whom they are per-

mitted to hold converse, so set in speech. Nothing can one think of but innocence and majesty, love and loveliness, after having wandered in "the alleys green" of that true paradise, and scented the flowing odours,

"Cassia, nard, and balm,"

of its wilderness of sweets.

But high-way or by-way ramblers cannot long dwell upon a train of thought, however congenial it may be to their hearts and fancies; their actual position is unfriendly to continuous musing, and favourable to the quick impressions of a present every moment changing: one image jostles out another with undue, though irresistible lightness; there is no graduating from paradise to Mont de Marsan.

Mont de Marsan, however, has its qualities,—a good inn tenanted by civil folks, who stripped their garden of its roses for us; a merited reputation for ortolans; a guide-book one for beautiful women—merited too, perhaps; an embowered public garden; a showy préfecture; and probably all the essentials of a *chef lieu*. We should have done more justice to the excellent breakfast provided

us, had not two waiting gentlewomen stood behind our chairs watching every movement, and anticipating every wish with such invincible assiduity, that to eat was quite out of the question. O how I envied the white cat! what a luxury to be served by hands only! But those vigilant maidens showed that they had eyes too, for they never took them off of us. I never saw such a strong sense of duty: no possibility of upsetting it. How often did I wish them both with Spurzheim, who would have revelled in their skulls, while we might have gone on with our breakfast. Three or four times I despatched the most distressingly attentive on some idle errand; but she seemed to possess the Irish faculty of being in two places at once, for no sooner did she seem gone, than her toppling madrass was again opposite to me.

Tormenting pertinacity! and only to be equalled by the unmannerly perseverance of a ghost,—a woman spectre in a gown of rustling silk, of whom I once heard a German tell. It was in the evening, as he hung up his gun after a day's sport in the empty hall of a solitary hunting-lodge, that she suddenly stood beside him. The figure was of one

not aged, and (as he expressed it) of bad beauty; but he knew where she came from by her eyes, and fled; while she rushed after him with the noise of a whirlwind. The pigeons in a dovecote outside the house, hearing it in their roosting places, flew out, beating their startled breasts against the windows; still the man fled: a chamber door stood open; he burst in,—two who had followed him, alarmed by the uproar, did the same; they double-barred the entrance and shut out, as they thought, their ghastly pursuer; when lo! she was there in the midst of them.

"Madame, préfere-t-elle les bougies?" is a usual inquiry at an inn not saucy enough to insist on certain refinements; but here the pretty daughter of the house, forestalling darkness and entering while it was yet day with a pair of wax lights, said, as she placed them on the table, "Mamma begs you will use these, as tallow spots her floors; but they will not be charged in the bill." Nor were they: a piece of liberality I could not in any way account for, not even with the help of the floors, which are old, worm-eaten, chinky, and of a fine ebony ground that bids defiance to casualties.

Mont de Marsan, being the capital of the Landes, attracts on market-days the inhabitants of the desert regions, who throng here on stilts, going (the inn-keeper assures us) as fast as the post. I should not have thought that the sands through which we rocked yesterday warranted such helps, but they are used there as in worse places. I regret not having seen a sheep-skin swain striding through the air, with a bright madrass striding after him,—or perhaps a country hood would be better: less like the fringed and bugled family, who attract gapers and gather sous at the corner of the Paris boulevards.

The shade of the vine is too often, for beauty at least, a mere figure of speech in France, where it is cautiously kept down to the currant-bush dimensions, to which is mainly owing the richness and vigour of the wine extracted from its fruit. Here we find it, and not unfrequently, trained over a trellis, or formed into a bower or pergola. Three or four avenues of plane trees ray out from Mont de Marsan, prefacing a thickety country occasionally ennobled by oaks in splendid singleness, and sometimes by solitary pine forests. Delightful

you to the Georgian vales, in whose deep
the royal Abbas wooed the wise and tende
The pear tree brings you back to the cottag
the apple puts in its word with a long s
school-boy larcenies:—all speak, from the
royalties of the forest down to the humb
thorn—perhaps the fullest of any—of w
village boys and girls call *secrets*.

A quiet country as we go on, with a sort of f
al beauty about it; a bit here and a bit th
bad bits too, as will happen. Sometimes a
footpath hides itself in a thicket, wild bough
it, and perhaps a wooden gate at the end op
a green meadow, as it might do at Coverly
any other of these charming old places that
be named without filling the mind with im
genuine English scenery. At others, a si
with a stately trunk and a broad paras
emulates the lonely beauty of the Italian pi
awakens that dreaminess of mind which th
scape of Italy creates and fosters.

It is perhaps owing to this same dreamin
I have fancied one never sees the whole
thing in Italy; the mind, like the eye, rec

impressions through a shaded medium. The people are the most natural, perhaps, in Europe; and yet —I do not know why, but it seems to me that one never sees their outside edge. The French, who are far more artificial, (partly perhaps from vanity, and partly perhaps from irritability of feeling which lays them bare,) expose themselves more to critical observation than the Italians, who, it may be, are too indolent to be demonstrative, and yet so marvellously natural, letting their faults and fancies drop out any way, that it seems paradoxical to say one cannot read them through and through. It is just the same with their landscape: the sky spread over it is clear and cloudless, bright and beautiful; and yet a soft vapoury haze veils the outline.

The carts in common use here are of a classical form, and drawn by oxen with cloths hung over them like petticoats; their horns are fiercely faced with sheep-skin; and sometimes a garland of twisted leaves is hung round the neck. With the garland, the effect is that of an antique basso relievo; but without it, the poor beast looks like a stage buffalo sheeted to hide its defective proportions, as the prominent elephant in *Blue Beard* is flounced

to screen the boy in each leg. Sometimes we meet cows yoked, and accoutred in the same way; contriving, poor innocent things! to look wicked in their fringed forehead-cloths, as children do in grotesque masks. Soft hills on the right to Grenade, where the men look like morris-dancers, or Aladdin before he raves princesses, or meddles with African magicians and their lamps. White blouses open at the throat, with shirts rainbow-striped, set off with a bright scarlet sash inside them, and a small flat berret of rich crimson, blue, green, or sometimes white, carelessly placed on one side of the head. It is probably a holiday; but this style of dress, and especially the berret, becomes general.

To-day maize and dust: the first has been stealing on us for some time, and the last hinders us from seeing even the hedges. No talking now of the young green, the protracted verdure of spring, as we did on the road to Bordeaux. I recollect to have heard a person, who had travelled outside passenger through the extreme south of France in summer, say, that he had never once during the whole journey seen the horses' heads. And I can believe it; for if but a breath of air comes, we are

like sister Anne upon her tower; and as we run along, a cloud runs with us dense enough to conceal Brandabarbaren king of the three Arabias, and all his warriors, whom the renowned Don Quixote was happy enough to discover under a similar envelopement. Changed horses at a farm-house, where the boys of the hamlet, not having time to gather cherries for us, tore down the boughs laden with fruit, and thrust them into the carriage; and little children followed us, cutting indescribable capers, and flying along with flowers, or grass, or weeds tied to the end of a flexible twig, which they bobbed into our faces,—merrier by half than opera Cupids, and quite as graceful.

Suddenly a beautiful descent opens with bright glades and a soft depth of shade about it, and the mountains of the Pyrenees stand for the first time before us, veiled from head to foot. They come, like shadows, dimly and awfully, and as we sink into the valley, seem to depart from us like the dreams of the morning. Again some sweet descents, and then more *landes*, though we are no longer in the department; and farther on another look at the still shrouded, and at this moment, me-

lancholy Pyrenees: no touches of evening light linger brightly on their summits, telling their neighbourhood with heaven; but low grey clouds cap them mistily, or gravely dividing, roll off slowly, revealing their bare forms without relief of light or shadow; which, as they become visible, seem more like a pale, diaphonous outline traced upon the heavens, than the solid limitary earth; a colossal phantom that appears near—even to approach us, yet without rounding into substance.

Only these mountains between us and Spain! that "tawny Spain" which dreamers love, and which seems to the imagination,—to mine at least, such a far-off land; farther, because less familiar than others that are, in actual measurement, out of sight a-head of it. Its society is still a sealed book, its roads unfrequently travelled by leisure-hour travellers. Diplomatists traverse it, armies have run and rode over it; but a positive knowledge of the country, an intimacy with its people, its monuments, its arts, its present literature, is still wanting. Its cities are little visited; the treasures of its galleries, and still more of its convents, imperfectly known; its women still written down

from *Gil Blas* or *Don Quixote*, if not from the old passion (I will not say *love*) and murder dramas of the Castilian poets: the men, from the same types, overflowing with bower and guitar gallantry; or, like the heroes of those same dramas, full of exaggerated, though elevated sentiments of tenderness and even delicacy, with a ferocious sense of honour, and a demand in their urgent natures for powerful situations, which, not being of every-day occurrence, leaves the palpitating mind a prey to the ever-ready excitement of fanaticism in all its shapes. If we talk of a Spanish captain, ten to one but we go back in thought to the time of the Cid, or at least to the conquest of Granada; if of a Spanish Don, nothing but a valet like Gil Blas can get us up, even to the time of the fourth Philip.

As to the Doñas they will always live latticed, duenna'd, serenaded stealthily, (if they do not die of a jealous husband or a faithless lover,) in our fancies; and we have good reason to be angry with the officers who tell us (in very clever books too) that the Spanish girls (how familiar!) quadrille at balls, throw aside the divine mantilla, wear French dresses, and are as cool-headed and arithmetical

as other misses. Not that we believe a word of it—O no! The *capa y espada* stories for us: long live the old illusions, and the gallant times when every woman was an idol and a mystery! when cavaliers fought by star-light—or without it, in the ruelles of Madrid, finding living scabbards for their true Damascus blades in the bodies of their rivals! or, like *The Physician of his own Honour*,* took the law into their proper hands, while the single shriek, or the groan that struggled with suffocation, gave awful testimony of its barbarous enforcement. But, illusions apart, what a charming writer calls the "game flavour," is still fresh in Spain. The people have not the fortune, or misfortune, to know us and others sufficiently to be spoiled by new modes and new money: they are still proof engravings, sharp, fresh, and distinct as an Albert Durer, or a Marc Antonio; their virtues and their vices indigenous, their habits and superstitions immemorial, their dress (I speak of the people) grand, graceful, and *their own*. And this character of individuality, throwing them back into past ages, gives a fine

* *El Medico de su Honra*,—one of Calderone's fearful tragedies.

antique colouring to their country and themselves. This may be also owing, in some measure, to the far-off and unfamiliar air which the Moorish mixture gives to Spanish story. To me, at least, the early period of the Moorish dominion seems almost as remote as the Babylonish captivity; and Muley Aben Hassan and Boabdil, though co-existent with the Medicis, as distant and foreign, compared with the Cosmos and Lorenzos, as Abubeker: while the court of the Moorish caliphs, and the splendour of the third Abdalraham's reign, appear almost to belong to the fabulous ages.

Thinking of all these things, I repeat to myself "only these mountains between us and Spain!" Spain! the land of old romance, from whose abundance fiction has long drawn her stores, and history that fecundity of incident and warm glow of colouring which trenches on the domain of fancy. Cordova, Seville, Granada, cities from which the sciences and knowledge brought by the Arabs out of the Egyptian and Chaldean countries were promulgated, and from whence the arts of peace, of poetry and music went abroad, refining the ferocious spirit of the times by the magic of their

melody, are behind that great wall. The land of Ruy Diez and Ponce de Leon (stirring names); of Lopez of the two thousand dramas, and Calderone of the fifteen hundred; of Velasquez, that great master of light and close follower of nature, whose works have been called the theology of painting; and of his still greater scholar, Murillo; the old Asturias of Gil Blas; the brown mountains of that high-minded and moral madman Don Quixote,—actually lie at the other side of those lofty mountains. What a medley of recollections, from the half-fabulous heroes of the *romanceros* to the Sanchos, Scipios, and Sangrados of more modern story, are conjured up by the mere thoughts of its vicinity! There they go, one pushing out the other. Valiant Cid, set spurs to Babieca and be off; make way for Bravonal de Saragossa, for the famed knight Don Bernard del Carpio, and the illustrious Count of Castille;—come, and gone. It is the noble Count de Cabra who passes, and "he of the exploits," the renowned Perez del Pulgar——But no more of this. Moorish ladies and Spanish ones, veiled beauties that glide like shrouded stars along the twilight *alameda*, knights

and squires, dukes and duchesses, duennas bearded and unbearded, Gitanos and Gitanas, crutched devils, bachelors, and Algerine captives, press on so throngingly, that all become effaced in the broad and general character of romance which essentially belongs to Spain, to its genius, history, traditions, and people. Such a country stretches out the mind, and plays with the imagination as the sun does with a flower, opening its half-closed leaves, and warming it into brightness.

But it is time to repose from this stirring drama, this rapid phantasmagoria, on the present pleasantness of the valley of Pau, and the rich côteaux of Béarn that open before us. Present pleasantness is not, however, the only claim of this ancient sovereignty; it puts in that of old and noble recollections also. United to France, not conquered by it, Béarn went along with its great Henry to join itself to the kingdom which had become his by the double right of lineage and of conquest: not yielding up the independence which wise laws emanating from wise princes had bestowed upon it, but maintained in it by the will of its brave son and sovereign; and remembering the days of

its *Cour Majour*, in which the citizens of the towns and the shepherds of the mountains had the right of voice, and to whose investigation and censure the chief of the state himself was open and amenable.

Behind this valley and those côteaux, the majestic Pyrenees stretch out proudly, brightening as we look upon them in the clear and golden light of evening, and carrying the mind along their nobly peaked and dentellated line, from the ocean to the Mediterranean. The eye does not see it all, but the imagination looks eastwards from the great central mountains of the Hautes Pyrenées, to the last bold point, where the Canigou interrupts the gradual decline of the chain; and westward till it forgets itself in the old country of Navarre, whose very sound is full of ancient story.

CHAPTER X.

PAU—MORNING SCENE—PROCESSIONS—HENRI QUATRE—A WORD OR TWO ABOUT HIM—THE SPELL OF THE SOUTH—THE MIND AND MYSTERY OF LANDSCAPE—THE CASTLE AND ITS ORIGIN—VISIT TO IT—THE VIEW—THE TURTLE-SHELL—THE NURSE'S COTTAGE—THE BIRMINGHAM QUEEN—THE BENEFIT OF BEING BANNER BEARER—ROSSINI—THE CASTLE AT EVENING—TWILIGHT MAGIC.

JULY.—Pau. This is a sweet engaging-looking place, to which my fancy warmed at once. Looked out of my window just as the sky had settled itself into broad daylight, and the market-folks were coming in with the fresh country air on them and the sweet garden bloom on their fruit, as if it had dropped gently into their baskets without the impression of a finger. Sky still grey, except in one streaky corner, and the air redolent of morning scents and humid sweetness.

This was an hour ago, and during the whole of the intervening time I have found ample amuse-

ment in the figures, passing and stationary, that have given life to my fore-ground. At this moment, two young women, linked together affectionately, arms round waists in a loving, country, Rosalind and Celia fashion, stand under my window, each with a piece of white cloth or flannel folded something in the Italian way, and laid upon the head so as to project from the forehead, and throw a shade over the upper part of the face. Two others, with baskets of fruit on their arms, and the same folded head-dress but composed of scarlet cloth edged with black, are chatting with the earnestness of gossips who meet only on market days. A cart, with oxen standing lazily, fills up a space in the back-ground; and women pass, some in the quaint capulet of black, white, or scarlet, some in the long dark mantle * covering the whole person down to the feet, while others carry water on their heads in double handled vessels of an antique and graceful form. Two mules, gaily caparisoned with Spanish saddles, led by two

* The long mantle is called capuchon; the shorter one, which forms a hood and hangs down behind, capulet: both are original and characteristic.

country girls, and followed by an old man with a long staff, floating locks, and a blue bonnet, that give him exactly the look of a Highland shepherd, complete, with the addition of a hurrying priest and some loitering children, a very lively and characteristic picture, framed in by the white buildings of a handsome square (not yet finished) which descends gently towards the country, and lets it in through two agreeable openings.

We have been but a few hours in Pau, and yet have already seen three processions. But this is Fête-Dieu time; at others, devotion is said to be only temperately demonstrative. In France (at least as far as we have seen) religious shows have neither the gorgeousness nor the muffled mystery of similar pageants in Italy. Ostrich feathers, palms, gold gauze, and ditto sunbeams, are less lavishly employed; double-gilt Madonnas in starred robes and jewelled diadems unknown; and if the archangel Michael does trample on the dragon, it is with a foot of more homely material than solid silver. No monks look on in their antique and austere garment,—made often a jolly one (for dress has its moral character) by the force of a convivial face,

or a festive recollection, its broad folds taking the waddle of a gossip's petticoat, and the crisped hair that wreaths its circlet between the tonsured crown and the laughing brow, almost swearing itself vine leaves. Neither are the church processions attended by those veiled brothers, whose eyes had better not be eyes for those who look at them, than glare as they seem to do through the holes cut in the linen cloth which covers the rest of the face. Excellent people, however; and though recalling by their gloomy disguise the spikes and pincers of the Inquisition, yet themselves of the Order of Mercy, and most meritoriously devoted to its duties.

But if there be little to create wonder here, there is nothing to shock, nothing like the wooden colossus that I once saw at Naples, towering in sacerdotal robes over the heads of the worshipping multitude; or the Madonna with the face entirely of silver, awfully surrounded by a tangle of real hair, with which I have also had the ill luck to come in contact.

Things as extraordinary, though more splendidly pantomimical, are still, it is said, got up at Aix and other towns of Provence on the day of

the Fête-Dieu, when the inventions of King René, as startling as those of barbaric paganism, are there performed in honour of the divinity. Our procession of this morning was a simple one, very white, and very maidenly; and it was pleasant to see it pass unguarded by soldiers, and unarranged by meddling priests and meddling officers, usually prominent features on such occasions. There was no attempt at splendour; but a cluster of coloured parasols and coloured dresses, exceedingly bright and gay, hemmed in the white veils, as a border of ranunculuses might do a parterre of lilies, with a rich harmonious opposition of tints, and contrived to supply its place very pleasingly.

"Le bon Henri," born in a castle that overlooks the town, and nursed in a cottage near it, is to Pau what Peter the Great is to Saerdam. Here he got the true peasant bringing up, which (to use a gossip's phrase) made a man of him, grounding him —not in the lore of schools or courts, but in those feelings of fellowship with man, and of sympathy with the demands of man's heart and the progress of his reason, not always instilled into the breasts of kings, though essential to the wise and just direction of their power.

There is something at once homely and grand in the character of this monarch, that takes hold of our affections with the strong familiar loving grasp of a child's hand: we know all about him, and love him the better for the knowledge. He did not try to persuade his people that he was an especial organization, combined of something much finer than the fine old-fashioned materials,—flesh and blood; he did not put embroidered seams and a flowing wig over his errors, but rose above them by the forty-horse power of a noble mind. The French are faithful to his memory: *le bon Henri* is a watch-word to which all hearts answer. The peasants love him, because they consider him almost as one of themselves,—a plain man, and a kind one, whose warm-hearted wish would have given to each a fowl in the marmite. The middle class love him for his justice, manliness, and bonhommie; the aristocracy, and the young of every degree, for his gallantry and chivalric spirit; mothers for the sake of the ambassador's story; ladies (they say, but it may be scandal,) for the sake of the charming Corisande d'Andoins and the beautiful Gabrielle; and all, for his good sense, good faith, and good fortune. At every fresh reign, the nation is pre-

sented with a note of hand, engaging to produce a new Henri Quatre, but it remains always promissory; and every failure is a fresh offering on the shrine of the old idol,

"Seul roi dont le peuple ait gardé la mémoire,"

as Voltaire (I believe) says in his frosty epic; or if not Voltaire, some other lucky poet, who—rare fortune! could set his panegyric to the music of his conscience. And yet even the Bon Henri has his detractors; some one said that he was a charlatan. The elements of charlatanism are tact, difficulties, and want of principle: he possessed the first eminently, and was early and constantly thrown amidst the second,—but he was honest as well as dextrous.

Only a few quiet lions at Pau,—no roaring ones; but such a view! just of the kind to make harmony in the soul, and fit it to sweet fancies. A Tempé with a mountain river winding through it, ineffable hills with woods, and lawns, and sunny dwellings on them, and verdure such as we are content to owe to our humid climate, but which springs up here in spite of Reaumur. Behind this summer scene rise up the lofty Pyrenees, spread-

ing out their broad arms as if to protect its placid sweetness; and on their sapphire front floats the soft and visionary colouring of Italy: we feel and see the south, its atmosphere of balm, its fusion of lights, and the purpling vapour, the crown-all of its landscape, the secret of its mind and mystery,—for has not landscape both? And as the fancy travels into it, does not the one feel the influence of the other? is it not led on by the sweet engagement which still, as it redeems its pledge, offers a fresh one? How often does *all* mean satiety; and to have seen *all*, known *all*, signify weariness of spirit! Long and lovingly does the fancy follow the shadow which it cannot look through; long and lovingly does it dwell on the visionary beauty with which the blushing light of a southern sky softens, without entirely obscuring, the harsher features of the earth, delighting in its sweet uncertainty as a child does to hear the humming of the wind in a sea shell. If it were a wooden fiddle with palpable strings, and a bow to scrape with, he would soon find out from whence the sound came: but the shell that has neither bow or string! Where lies the music that, when its

purple lips are pressed to the ear, comes to it so rushingly? Happily he does not know, for in the mystery lies the magic; if he did, it would be thought no better than the whistle of the wind through the key-hole.

It is the same with natural objects as with sound. Many a time have I seen the summer-evening light in Italy colour the vapour on the mountains with a rose-lilac flush, that made common spots look like enchanted ones; and wherever it rested, raised up half-seen temples, where the imagination went in and worshipped.

The view and the castle comprise (I believe) all the show things of Pau. In the evening we shall pay a visit to the antique towers, and the cradle of the bold Béarnais. An old castle, or other monument, chaptered in the history of a great man or a great period, is a wonderful setting off to a country town: an interest, and sometimes a deep one, to those who think; a kill-time to those who do not; a leaf in the sketch-book, a note in the journal, a resource to the inn-keeper, a livelihood to the beggar, and an amusement to all those who love to renew acquaintance with old recollections, and who

find pleasure in studying the moral biography of the man, or the events of the moment, in those memorials that attest, have witnessed, and outlive both. Touching this castle the tradition is, that a certain Béarnais prince, fatigued with the incursions of the Saracens of Spain, forsook his royal dwelling at Morlas, and looking about for a fitting spot to build another on, found it where the town of Pau now stands. The old possessors of the land were the people of the valley of Ossau, who exchanged it for the right of occupying the high places in the hall, which was to be appropriated in the new building to the sittings of the *Cour Majour*. Three posts (pieux) marked the spot, and where the middle one was placed rose the castle, and in due time its dependant town, called at first (as some say) Paou—the Béarnais word for *pieu*; or according to others, Pal, from the Latin word *palus*, which in process of time was transformed into Pau.

Monday.—Just returned from the château: the exterior a happy piece of colouring, and redeems the house-like character it has from some points, by its flanking turrets, domineering tower—square

of similar or approaching character; for one cannot compare the vale of Pau to the bay of Naples, nor to the lake scenery of Switzerland or Italy, nor yet to the highly-decorated and open landscape of Richmond Hill. It recalls Berne, or rather the view from it; but the tone of colouring is more cheerful, and the long withdrawing vale that hides itself in the mountains, has still more depth and warmth than even the fine view from the cathedral platform of the latter place. In its snow mountains Berne has a feature which, as the sun sets, or the twilight darkens on it, outruns the limits of comparison; the flow of the river, too, is fuller and more even,—not, if I recollect right, interrupted by dry and stony patches or ragged ridges as the Gave * is in some seasons; but there is a prodigious flush and fulness of beauty here, the form and wooding of the côteaux leave nothing to be wished for, and the fine mixture of southern skies and southern vegetation with the young verdure of moister latitudes is perfectly delicious.

I had expected something rougher than the

* *Gave* is the generic name of all mountain rivers in the Pyrenees.

capacious turtle-shell, suspended by gold cords and entwined with white taffeta, now decorated with tri-colour flags, which passes for the cradle of the good king,—was so literally, I believe; for some honest Bourbonite hid it in the hard times of the Revolution, and bringing it to day-light when the storm was over, established its claims to legitimacy. But its modern toilette has made it so stupidly dressy for its subject, that one wishes not to believe it had ever held such a fine little fellow as, no doubt, he was; the exhibition-room, too, is so exceedingly to day-ish, that one almost fancies it open by mistake, and that Henri de Bordeaux, not Henri de Navarre, must have been its tenant. Above stairs is the chamber in which the stout-hearted Jeanne (meet mother for a brave son) sang in her hour of travail that Béarnais ballad, or rather canticle, which she had promised to her father;* and where Henri d'Albret,

* Mouste Dame deii cap deii poun,
Adyudat—me à d'aquest hore:

which, being un-Béarnized, means

Nôtre Dame du haut du pont,
Aidez moi à cette heure.

wrapping the baby in his mantle, fed it with wine, as a nursing Faun might do an infant Bacchus.

The cottage of the real nurse is a trim thing in a garden, touched up like the turtle-shell; an old farm-house near it, with brown shutters and a rusty broken-down look, seemed to us more like what it ought to be: but our guide insisted,—so we were obliged to put up with whitewash and Bengal roses. As we strolled in the Parc, a public walk of considerable beauty, we met a little girl of six years old dressed like a dancing-dog. I am so fond of children, (and the feeling I am happy to say is reciprocal, for they generally make ready friends with me,) that when I go into a public garden I am always on the look-out for them; and as my eyes wandered about, they lighted on the poor over-dressed thing, who with a premature feeling of vanity had contrived to put itself in our way. A paste comb, a rope of coral, bracelets and armlets of some tarnished gilt trash, a string of pearl beads of the true whiting's-eye quality,—"a mussel-monger would have made a better,"—and a vinaigrette, which her companions opened and shut in a transport of admiration, were all hung upon her dimi-

nutive person, which carried moreover enough of window-blind muslin and red linen to dress out a company of monkeys. Three little girls attended on their Birmingham queen, watching her movements with the most servile assiduity; while she, a very plain and vul_ar child, seemed to have a thorough consciousness of the eminence on which pinchbeck and sealing-wax coral had placed her. The companions were shabby; one a *wee* thing half in rags, but clean, and with the frock falling from the pretty shoulders in an artless way, that might have taught the deckers of the doll how lovely the simplicity of childhood is, even in its meanest attire, how folly can spoil it, and how little the merry fairies of our homes and blessings of our hearts stand in need of finery to set off the rounded form of the healthy arm, or decorate the wild ringlets, smoothed by a mother's hand into momentary sleekness.

But all this splendour was, as I afterwards learned, a pious and judicious invention for inseparably allying vanity and devotion in the poor thing's mind. She had walked in the procession, had held a string of the white satin banner, and

(according to the received mode) wore the gauds till the day was over. This child's religion was evidently gold lace, and will probably continue so; if she turns out a devotee, she will worship the glittering altar-cloth; if a sinner, the seeds were perhaps sown to-day.

As we returned by the Place Royale, we spied Rossini looking on enjoyingly, while two grisettes, violently frizzed, played at four corners with as many trinketed couriers under the shade of some trees in the public walk. He looked, I thought, oyster-like—not like Tilburino's oyster crossed in love, but like a fat complacent Colchester. I wonder what would Lavater have said to him? Would he have discovered the lofty Semiramis under the soft folds of his double chin? or the passionate Othello, in the clear blue of his large eye?—the cold blue, I was going to say; but those who are familiar with its expression declare, that it is an eye full of exquisite meaning, rich in mirth, finesse, and mockery; perfect as an organ of mellow convivial joyousness, and eminently susceptible of being made the envoy of tender and delicate feeling. There certainly are eyes that must be

talked to before one can believe what a world and all they have to say; his may be among the number, but carelessly looked at, they seem expressive of the most perfect and constitutional sang-froid.

Looked again at the glorious view: let no one cavil at the word *glorious* until they have seen the mountains unveiled as they are to-day, and then I am sure they will agree in its fitness, and allow that they have seldom seen so much warmth and loveliness in so stately a setting. The river valley looks within its mountain-frame like youth sporting at the feet of indulgent and still beautiful age; who benignantly defends its joys from harm without darkening them: there is no sudden or offensive contrast, the living and progressing richness melts almost imperceptibly into the barren and stationary majesty, as day shades off into the settled darkness of night.

The castle again; and after sunset. Even at this dim hour the interior has nothing interesting, nothing to help its recollections: large rooms, some unfloored others unceiled, cold walls, and modern windows,—but looking on such a scene! The closet or, as they call it, boudoir of Queen

Jeanne, has a western view, which, at this hour—but it must be at this hour—merits a pilgrimage. The stream of orange light—not merely colour, but live light—which the sun has left behind it, spreads over the whole western heavens, but divided by the broad beams that still ray out from its golden bed. The mountains to the south-east gather shadows; while the river, that winds slowly through its dark and gracefully tufted banks, catches a pale silvery shine, which, as it flows onwards to the west, changes to the amber of the sky. The grass on the platform of the castle seems of a tenderer green, the light leaves grow transparent and tremble in the air like feathers; while between their open line and the sunset hills, now fast shifting into cloudy purple, rise two swelling uplands, divided by a dark cleft,—one storied with trees and houses, all castle-looking at this moment, the other dropping down suddenly to the river; both thickened with wood, black now as night, and forming a dark belt between the light green immediately below the eye, and the still glowing, skyey distance; which, reddening as it fades until the golden orange becomes pale ruby, turns trees into castles, and

raises the grey convent on the detached hill, where sunshine may perhaps disclose a group of trees, or a cluster of cottages. Sweet and gracious magic! beautiful and innocent witchcraft of the twilight hour! I feel while I watch your changeful necromancy as if a fresh spring had burst out in my heart, and the gift of belief had come again with it; the charming belief in all that bright phantasma which experience calls visions, but which are truths—welcome and precious to the fancy.

I could stay for hours at this window; but the night is fast darkening, and of all the edges which made points of light, though dim ones, a few minutes since through the dark trees, only the long and perfectly even line of a large building, whose flat roof rises a little above them, is now visible; and that long, level, solid line, marked horizontally on the pale sky, has a beauty in its calm regularity for which, in the midst of so many more striking objects, one is at a loss to account, unless by the feeling of repose that it communicates to the mind, and the image of simplicity which its pure and unvarying form presents.

It was all dark when we passed through the castle chambers, but not startling: nothing aids the fancy, nothing quickens thought; except perhaps the staircase, or rather, the low, coved roof of stone, elaborately carved, which runs along with it, seeming to me (I know not why) as if it was carrying the eye into something subterraneous, and which became effective as night gathered on it: so did the statue of Henri in the poor nook at the bottom. I knew a person who could not bear to sit in the room with a portrait, because the eyes (she said) would follow her; but a statue in the darkness-visible hour, is next neighbour to a ghost.

CHAPTER XI.

ROAD TO LES EAUX BONNES, AND LES EAUX CHAUDES—PASTORALS — SPANISH CHILDREN — LIVE STOCK AND ROSES—THE MOUNTAINS — ARUDY, AND THE VALLEY OF OSSAU — WOMEN OF OSSAU—LES EAUX BONNES—THE OLD TREE — WONDERS IN THE SKY — LES EAUX CHAUDES—PAU—THE VISCOMTE D'ORTHE—HENRY IV. —ROYAL LOVE-LETTERS — BERNADOTTE — ROYAL WISDOM—A FAIRY TALE.

FIVE posts from Pau, in the heart of a mountain hollow, are Les Eaux Bonnes. The springs, which are used both internally and as baths, have a high reputation, especially in pulmonary complaints; as the neighbouring ones, Les Eaux Chaudes, have for paralysis, rheumatism, &c.

Sweet scenes lead from Pau to these springs; first through the valley of Gand,—itself all pleasantness and often beauty, and onward through scenes whose pastoral sweetness grows as we advance into something like romance,—the sylvan, gentle, ballad romance of the hill-and-valley countries that lie at

the foot of the great mountains ; serving as thresholds to their high chambers, but thresholds sown with innumerable sweets. There the hidden brook becomes an open stream, brawling over the low steps into which its granite bed seems artificially hewn ; or flowing on in its pale-green purity by the road-side, with angry chidings or sweet murmuring. This river gorge is beautiful ; a narrow valley of broad shade and delightful murmur, a road and a river—and no more, between two ranges of lofty hills, growing gradually into mountains, and feathered upwards with the fine branching foliage of the oak ; and between their single trunks all the pretty accidents of surface, colouring, bush, fern, and smooth turf made to lay shadows on, coming in deliciously. Now and then the hills step back a little, and then the humid meadows that find room on the river's brink, show off such beautiful airs of freshness, that one laughs in the heart to see them.

The world has done with Thyrsis and Amaryllis, with iron-hearted nymphs and love-sick swains, dialoguing their mistresses' charms and wagering the first yearling of the flock, the poesied ring, or

pipe of amber, to sustain the pre-eminence of a sloe-eyed Phyllis, or a sky-blue Daphne; and no longer takes interest in the parental counsel or just decisions of the old shepherd Palemon, or Evander, though he may adjudge the ivy-bound bowl, or cunningly carved crook, with the equity of a master in chancery.

If I were to stick them on my hills, like the nine muses on a drop-scene, or scatter my vales all over with their piping, listening, loving, scorning figures, my hills would look like pasteboard, and my valleys no better than play-house decorations. Nymphs and swains your occupation 's o'er!—blank as Othello's: but console yourselves, soft worshippers of Pan; there are records of your innocent loves and lives that will last for ever,—Virgil has vowed it, and so have others. But in this analytical, utilizing, positive age, your shrines are deserted, and the memory of your worship laid upon the shelf like a cracked china doll, or a piece of tarnished tissue. A file of Spanish children (perfect Murillos) at this moment crossing a rough wooden-bridge, with sacks on their backs like begging friars, and hurrying (on the friars' mission) to

come up with us; a team of oxen drawing a light cart, and toiling along as if it was a heavy one, knocking their knees together, and their heads against each other; an old Béarnais with floating locks, letting them go their own way; and a grandam at a cottage-door—a pastoral Hecate, taking care of an imp who has frightened a hen almost into convulsions, may perhaps do as well—must indeed; for, except two cows who are standing still in the middle of a brook, and a huddle of pigs growing giddy under the guidance of an eight years old swineherd, I see no other live stock.

Roses have luckily not gone out of fashion with pastorals; they are still sweet at all times, and good for many uses; and among others, for brightening up blackberry hedges as they do here, garden hedges, with bushes for birds to warble in and posies for the shrine of the Virgin, within their sweet enclosures. Upon the hill above the hamlet of Rabenac, is one of those old-fashioned mansions which embellish the côteaux of Béarn; and before it, one of those bright lawns that emulate the softness and beauty of true English sward; and about it wood; and beneath, our old gossip the river, gab-

bling to the trees that wash their roots in its waters. I shall say no more of the green ascents, for I am persuaded the fairies have something to do with their magical freshness; and that without knowing the secrets of faërie-land, there would be no giving the true elf-green and May-morning glisten to July meadows. Some who know nothing about these same fairies, talk of rain which has fallen here lately, and point out the moist leaves of the oaks that make hedge-rows or groupes, or back into the woody depths, as proofs; but in such cases, proof is nothing to fancy.

Splendid catches of light on the mountains. Honour to the mountains! they have been more or less with us all the day,—gauzily veiled, but not hidden. Regions of thought, and lifters up of all that is not dross within us,—blessings on ye! Forests, seas, mountains, are the everlasting tables on which God has graven his attributes of beauty, power, and glory. We know it, not because our eyes admire it, but by the instant and instinctive homage of the heart.

A fine pause at Sévignac, and a look down over a rich fore-ground of oaks upon a valley of Italian

colouring, with its dark-roofed, village-looking town, (Arudy,) and mellow castle, and winding river, and the soft plains,—green, warm, and wooded, set in with the wonderfully tinted hills, which never fail here. It is a scene calculated to awaken delight and then compose it to meditation. Beyond these plains are others, dotted round their outermost edges with dark villages, each with its baby cupola, or small slated steeple. Here the Gave, dividing into many branches, makes weedy or tufted islets, or pebbly patches, just as the wild rivers do in the lonely, and often ragged valleys of Italy; and the valley of Ossau dives off into the mountains, tracing between them the dark line that leads to Eaux Bonnes and Eaux Chaudes.

And now we are in midst of the living beauties of Ossau; who well deserve their reputation, fine creatures as they are, in their large white chemises drawn in round the bottom of the throat, and forming, with the exception of a short black petticoat of coarse woollen cloth, their only garment. A black capulet, or a white edged with black, hoods the face slightly round, and is thrown back behind the shoulders; bare feet, and generally, though not

always, ankle stockings with a fringe at the end of them; which, with the addition of a row of gold or gilt beads encircling the neck, or a slight black string with a silver heart and cross pendent from it, complete the simple dress in which the girls of Ossau, whose fine statue-like shapes set off their undecked garb, surprise the passing stranger,—and not only by their general air of beauty, but by the nobleness of their deportment, their young queen's dignity, and sometimes by the elevated cast and perfect regularity of their features. The straight fall of the capulet gives a sphinx-like air to the head, which is often strengthened by the form of the throat and bust: they look like women of Thebes or Memphis, or what we fancy they may have been; and so grand, that when they return our gaze with a hearty laugh, as sometimes happens, it seems a condescension more of accord with their innocence than with their majesty. It happens to be the hour when all, except a few who remain in the fields tossing the hay and spreading it, are returning from their day's labour. Among a number who might pass for beauties, is one absolutely undeniable; such a delightful little face—

small, pure, radiant; eyes deliciously opened; a fair virgin front; an Isis figure, tall, grand, and firm: but the gay laugh and simple mirth of the rest, and no idea that we are admiring her! What the young women of Ossau may appear to those who pass this way to-morrow, I cannot say; but we all received the same impression.

After the little town of Laruns, the road divides and forks off,—the right prong to the Eaux Chaudes, the left to the Eaux Bonnes. Both are strikingly placed, each in its mountain gorge; both melancholy, but the last approached more smilingly, though when attained, buried in the hollow of the lofty barriers which surround it, shutting out all apparent issue. A rough path,* inaccessible to wheels—perhaps to horses, but I think not, communicates with the valley of Azun; but to those who cannot undertake the mountain work, the village of Eaux Bonnes is the *ultima thule*. But it is not without its watering-place elements,—a spacious hotel, a table d'hôte, public room, evening meetings, music, cards, occasional

* Now (I am told) improved into what, in the language of mountains, is called a road.

balls, and picturesque rides—charming ones, we are told, though the immediate spot is blocked up and melancholy.

Eaux Bonnes consists of fourteen or fifteen houses, but large ones; it makes, as I have just now said, attempts at gaiety,—perhaps successful ones; and yet the malady for which its springs are pronounced most efficacious, is perhaps, of all those which undermine the principle of life, the most profoundly melancholy,—its flattery is so sad, so hollow. The young smile, talk of the future, glow with bright colours while they do so, lose nothing of the warmth of affection in the egotism of illness, live amongst us to the last,—caring for the world, clinging to its interests, and wringing the hearts of those who watch them, knowing how soon the earth, which they still linger on so lovingly and hopingly, will cover their poor remains.

There is a show point of view here from a hill—I have forgotten the name, close to the village: to-day it was set in with clouds, and sullen. The torrent of the Valentin makes a beautiful cascade in the romantic glen below, to which we descended by a rough path, quite slippery from the rain that drizzled softly on us; so down came my chairmen at

the foot of such a venerable tree, that I heartily forgave them for the shock. I might have perhaps passed its knotted roots unobserved, but for the stumble which brought me into close contact with the convoluted fibres, that struck their grapples sturdily into the earth, and enwreathed each other in fine serpent-like folds. Such a tree may have suggested to the sculptor the idea of the Laocoon, as the Chinese found an alphabet in the fibres of plants, and Christians an architecture in the green aisles of the forest.* How often do the accidents of nature originate thoughts which, but for their aid, might have slept for ever. O the landscapes that I have seen after sunset in the skies—the bright and lonely ones!—heaven-touched, and leaving in the mind such images as even the beautiful earth could not have offered to it. And once I saw an ascension, the figure mounting upwards; and at each side an old man in long garments, kneeling as if on the point of a rock that seemed joined to the earth,—the one with both arms extended, the other with the whole body stretching after the ascending figure; the world below with the gloom of twi-

* So we loved to fancy; but now we are told another story.

Returning from Eaux Bonnes, we found ourselves at the point from which the road to Eaux Chaudes dives into the mountains. The village is approached through a sombre and majestic defile, rocky lines boldly ledged, and a pale green torrent tearing through it. A few dull-looking houses, coldly placed, constitute the village; some wan faces look out from the windows; a small rain falls without noise; every thing seems sad. The bluster of a storm has life in it; but this silent, constant, melancholy dew, seems made to moisten grave sods: all look sick down to the children, and none look cheerful, except two middle aged gentlewomen, (house-letters by their look,) who stand in their balcony simpering as the sound of wheels approaches, and anticipating the chance of new arrivals. But there is a gorge beyond the village in a high tone of romance,—lone, and wild, and powerful, which I know I should love better than any thing at Eaux Bonnes: we got on as far as we could in it; but the rain thickened and the clouds rolled down on the hills, so that we were glad to hasten back to the inn, where we sat drying our shawls, and looking through the mist till we were

heartily sick of Eaux Chaudes, whose fair-weather face we had not an opportunity of admiring.

The rambling English seem to love Pau, and some have chosen it for their residence. It has many good houses in airy and agreeable—sometimes splendid positions, a few handsome hotels, reasonable markets abundantly supplied, delicious walks and rides, a charming climate, romance in the mountains, and real life in the mountain baths; with a reputation for winter gaiety, and social intercourse on pleasant terms. The campagnes that are scattered about on the hills have a charming look about them, and tempt one to inquire if the one in the wood, or the one on the lawn, is to be let: what a nearer inspection may reveal, I know not,—scrubby secrets, perhaps, or tasteless ones; but the distant look is most inviting.

The view, however, is the court-card here: if I lived at Pau and out of sight of it, I think I should never willingly pass a day without visiting some spot from whence I could dwell on its arcadian beauty. Pau, which has the honour to be the capital of the Basses Pyrenées, may be called the vestibule of its mountains, as Berne is of the

Oberlands,—but with this difference; that a drive of a few hours takes you into the heart of the former, while you must often wait the pleasure of the water-sprites of the lake of Thoun, (gruffy gentry sometimes,) till you get sorely out of patience with lake navigation.

There is a spacious establishment here for improving the race of horses: those from Navarre are particularly esteemed. In affections of the lungs, they are sent like other invalids to the mineral springs, with which the Pyrenees abound; and where they get cured, (as a man just now told us,) "tout comme nous autres." In lieu of antiquities and the arts, Pau boasts of having given birth to two kings,—Henri the past, and Bernadotte the present:* it boasts too of a noble-minded son, who was no king, the brave Viscomte d'Orthe, who being governor of Bayonne at the time of the Saint Bartholomew, and receiving an order from Charles IX. for the immediate massacre of all the Huguenots within his reach, returned the following laconic answer;—"Sire, j'ai communiqué la lettre

* Pau has also given birth to the celebrated mathematician, Renau.

semble sont bons, à quelque source qu'on les puisse mettre, et je ne suis pas d'avis de les céder à personne. Je suis fort aise que vous aimiez bien ma sœur; c'est un de plus assurés témoinages que vous puissiez me rendre de votre bonne grâce, que je chéris plus que ma vie encore que je l'aime bien. Bon jour, mon tout!" And another, "Si j'eusse péri dans le combat, ma dernière pensée eût été pour Dieu, l'avant dernière pour vous." *

Napoleon's early letters to Josephine have much of this naïve and heartfelt tenderness; they have always seemed to me simply and touchingly demonstrative of an affectionate nature,—even of a household heart; the last quality probably for which posterity will give him credit.

Of Bernadotte, all speak with respect: nothing (it is said) can be better, kinder, or more judicious than his conduct towards his relations here. He does not invite them to Stockholm, or countenance their uninvited approaches; he does not push his subjects out of old posts to make room for them; and has not yet thought of turning a préfecture

* Some of his letters to her are dated, "De nos délicieux deserts de Fontainbleau."

The maternal ancestors of Bernadotte have, in common with other families of the mountains of Cauteretz, a domestic fairy; and the Abadies of Adast, from whom his grandmother descended, have a very sweet and lovely one, of whom the following graceful and authentic tradition existed in the archives of the hamlet of Adast long before the birth of Bernadotte; who, retaining a confused recollection of the prophecy which had amused his baby days, thought of, and wrote about it from his Scandinavian throne with something of the superstition of a mountaineer. I am indebted to the source already gratefully alluded to* for this genuine legend, which I have translated literally.

PREDICTION OF THE FAIRY ABACIA,

Fairy of the Family of the Abadies of Adast.

In the days when the fairy Urganda (one day old, another young) had her favourites among certain knights-errant whom she especially protected; when the fairy Monto, foundress of the city of Mantua, changed herself into an adder once a

* See the foregoing note.

week, and Melusina, from the highest tower of the ancient castle of the Lusignans, announced with mournful and piercing shrieks their destruction and the ruin of the royal house; beneath a hillock to the south of Adast, in the valley of Lavedan, the fairy Abacia remained enchanted in a fountain, which is now no longer one, being at this day dry.

Tradition has not told us whether she was of the first, the second, or the third order of fairies; but Destiny, more powerful than them all, had carefully assigned to each the part she had to perform on earth, and it was written in her immutable decrees, that the fairy Abacia could only be disenchanted by a man not married, who was fasting, and yet had eaten. How many years elapsed before any one thus qualified appeared to release the imprisoned fairy, tradition has also forgotten to inform us.

However, it so happened that, towards reaping time, the young heir of the house of Abadie of Adast went abroad into his harvest fields, having for his companion the heir of Vignaux and Natalaa; and going in to the one where the fountain was with the fairy Abacia hidden under its waters, took an

ear of corn, and breaking a grain between his teeth, cast it away without swallowing it.

At the same instant a young and beautiful woman stood before him; who, fixing on him the look which especially belongs to fairies, said in the sweetest of voices, "You have disenchanted me, and ought now to take me as your wife. Do you consent?" The young man, enamoured of her beauty, readily agreed. "My fate (she added) still depends on another engagement. Promise that you will never call me 'lady,' or 'lady of the water.'" He promised.

Two children, beautiful as angels, were the fruits of this union; every thing prospered in their happy home; but at an epoch, of whose date there exists no trace, it happened that the husband went up to see his hay cut on the summit of the mountain neighbouring to Cauteretz. As he returned in the evening with his servants, he saw with astonishment and anger, that the unripe grain of his fields had been cut down and piled in shocks; and his wrath redoubled when on arriving at his house he learned that it had been done by his wife's command. He refused to listen to the gentle explanations which

she would have given him; and at once to humiliate and punish her, cried out, "Lady—lady of the water!" The fairy instantly disappeared.

Then did he weep, groan, and utter bitter cries; but he was destined never to behold her more. Sometimes, when he was absent, she would come and embrace her children, combing their hair, and always with a golden comb.

One evening when she was alone with them, she said, and her tears fell as she spoke, "It is owing to your father's perjury that I have not done for you all that my power as a fairy might have enabled me to undertake, and now my destiny calls me into another region; but from thence I shall watch over you. Love virtue, walk in the paths of honour, and learn what I am permitted to disclose of the secrets of futurity. Know, that one of your descendants shall have much renown, and that a warlike and illustrious nation of the north will call him to reign over their nation."

Having thus spoken, the fairy Abacia disappeared—and for ever!

CHAPTER XII.

THE VALLEYS OF PAU—EARLY PRINCES OF BEARN—THE PEASANTS—THEIR CHARACTER AND HABITS—ALL THAT CAN BE DONE WITH A PIG—A COUNTRY WEDDING—NAY AND ITS MARKET—CHATEAU D'ANGOSSE—AN HOUR THERE ON THE GRASS—NEIGHBOURHOOD OF PAU REVISITED—EVENING AND AUTUMN—THE ORFRAIE—OLD CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS—THE FOREIGN TOMB—APRON-POCKET NOTES.

THE valleys in the immediate neighbourhood of Pau (after passing the river) are of exceeding sweetness and beauty. There are soft, open, pastoral valleys, and close wooded ones watered by cold clear streams, that filter through beds of granite, or flow on swiftly or loiteringly through charming meadows, and along wood-sides, that seemed made for their sweet companionship. Sometimes the road hangs on the brow of a hill, and catches over the fresh ridges that enclose the low grounds the alpine chain, glowing at the fall of day like lapis lazuli; at others, runs along with

the wild stream through leafy solitudes or bright lawns, every one a pastoral. Of these meadows some are just mown, soft and even as our garden grass-walks, and such a green! not metallic, not verdigris, but steeped through and through till the depth becomes dazzling; others all flowery and scented, waiting for the scythe; and all enclosed within hedge-rows chiefly of oak, (here superb,) or wooded banks that form an irregular border encroaching gently on the meadows, or retreating from them into sylvan depths. Through every opening, from every height, the mountains, shadowy or pronounced, are visible; unless it be when the clouds drop low, and then the rich and lovely côteaux have it all to themselves, and make another kind of country of it; peaks and eagles vanish, and vines, ploughshares, woods, and woodlarks,—the thrush, the linnet, and the hawthorn bush, come into play.

I have never seen a country more beautifully ridged: one wooded line runs parallel with another, not stiffly, but in soft and graceful undulations; a third and higher one stretches off beyond; valley after valley lies behind them, full of silence, shade,

and freshness, and as there are literally no bad bits here, every country-house has at least a fine position, usually a pleasant country character, and often woods and lawns that we love to liken to our own of England.

The early viscounts of Béarn, Centulles, and Gastons were brave men, who made war against the Moors of Spain, or the Saracens of the Holy Land; and swore, with a hand on the missal and the cross, to preserve the rights of their subjects sacred from all infraction. That they were independent sovereigns is proved, by their having had a mint at Morlas, where they coined gold; a privilege never allowed by the kings of France to their vassals. In the feodal times, when the great vassals of the crown of France paid homage for, or disputed thrones with, the monarch, Béarn preserved, under the sage and paternal government of her princes, her laws and independence; and of that independence her sons are to this day honourably proud.

Amongst those princes, local history has distinguished Gaston the Fourth, who fought bravely in the Holy Land, side by side with the far-famed

Tancred; and who, according to the chroniclers of the times, was one of those who at the siege of Jerusalem passed the bridge with Godefroi de Bouillon, the Duke of Normandy, the Count of Flanders, and two or three others of heroic name; and having faithfully fulfilled the duties of a Christian knight, bathed (as was the custom with those who, having staid their time, prepared to bend their steps homewards) in the river Jordan, gathered palm branches in Jericho in the garden of Abrasias, and then returned to Béarn, and gave thanks to God in the church of Lescars for his great mercies.

Every thing in the Pyrenees has a character of its own. We seem to leave France behind us as we enter them, and the eye is immediately struck by the sudden and singular change. The dress of the women, their capulets and capuchons; the physiognomy of the young men with their Henri Quatre air, *fin et gaillard*; the shepherd look, pastoral and patriarchal, of the old ones; the southern nonchalance, Spanish-sounding language, and warm vegetation, all combine to produce an unexpected effect, which is increased by the tribes

of Spaniards of all classes, whom political casualty or the desire of gain have thrown in upon the country. The labourers who come over from Arragon, being harder workers than the native peasants, and content with lower wages, are sure to find employment; their wives and children beg, and contribute not a little to give a foreign and especial character to the country.

The shepherds of Béarn have the dark eyes and the aquiline nose, as in the time of Montaigne, but I am not sure of the "odeur de forte con-science." The old Béarnais with his small flat berrêt, blouse of blue or white, his hair cut close on the crown, but flowing over the shoulders like the kings of the Merovingian race, has something frank yet staid in his aspect, which becomes the simple and pastoral character of the country,—I speak especially of the old men, the young ones being free gaillards, who have not yet come to their dignity. Old age in peasant men is usually dignified, but rarely so in peasant women, who are oftenest bleared and full of care; while the men contrive to set off their silver hairs with a healthy and pleasant, though magisterial, serenity of coun-

tenance. I have seen a few respectable Roman-nosed matrons here, stern as northern prophetesses, but erect and active in their long black robes and scarlet capulets; but these lofty specimens are scarce, while the hearty old grandads seem all of the same upright, ruddy, patriarchal race. The young men are often handsome, with a marked expression of shrewdness and simplicity; two qualities apparently opposite, but frequently united: the young women in general comely, superb in the valley d'Ossau, pretty and coquette at Pau, expert (the damsels of Pau, I mean,) in the tie of a madrass as the grisettes of Bordeaux; and, if the scandalous chronicle says true, not at all disposed to follow the example of that fair girl of Monasque, who seeing that her beauty had made an impression on the susceptible heart of Francis the First, scalded or scorched her face till she had destroyed every thing that could have excited his dangerous admiration.

In summer, the light vest, or the blouse, (the long-sleeved tunic of the ancient monument,) is the habitual dress of the Béarnais peasant. In cold weather, the *cape* with its friar's hood keeps out the

biting air. It is probably the same "cape Bergerique" which "Sainct Martin acheta pour son usage" hundreds of years ago. In remote places the people are like well-preserved coins, that hand down to us the fashions of past ages.

The Béarnais peasant is cordial, shrewd, civil, and hospitable; *fin et courtois*, say those who do not love him; but those who do, tell charming stories of his kindly welcomings and disdain of remuneration, his courteous, joyous, careless spirit. Mildness and urbanity seem especially to belong to his character; but the rougher Bigorrais, who piques himself on his frankness, calls him more silken than sincere. The Béarnais peasant is story-loving, fond of long gossipings at the cabin fire by the resinous blaze of the pine branch, fond of the *broïlle*,* of the *garbure*,† with or without the salted leg of a fat goose, or the slice of bacon in it; fond too of the bon vin de Jurançon, *non baptisé*, but sober withal, and generally (it is said) a spare liver. His days seem to pass without care, as

* A paste of maize.

† Sort of vegetable, or rather cabbage, soup, thickened with potatoes boiled to a paste, and seasoned with hog's lard or bacon.

without the power of luxurious indulgence, and much as the shepherds did in Virgil's time, or at least in his Eclogues. Of the sweet apple, mellow chestnut, and country cheese, there is no lack, but the pig is the article of luxury; every peasant contrives to have one, from which he extracts as much lard (*graisse*) as possible, which, if he can afford it, he reserves to season his garbure; the brief luxury of the unkeepable pudding is enjoyed at home, the rest often traded on, at least by the poorer cottager, who contents himself with the flesh-pot savour communicated by the coarse unctuousness of the lard to the simple ground-work of the unvarying soup. When the death is over, comes a bustle that has something the air of a festival; *saucisses* and *saucissons* are multiplied, till the wonder is how one pig could have furnished even the tithe of such profusion; pots of lard are ranged in graceful uniformity under their rich festoons; and all this without any detriment to the regular *jambons*, *côtes*, or *petits salés*, which constitute the winter stock. But the chapter of pigs might be spun out here into a volume: in the Basses Pyrenées a considerable traffic is carried on

in the pig way, and a large portion of the hams, distinguished by the European title of Jambons de Bayonne, are brought to perfection in the cabins of Béarn.

A wedding here is sometimes two or three days of merriment to the neighbours of the bride-folks, who keep a sort of open house during that time, eating all day, dancing all night, and flinging away their hard earnings as if they had not worked for them. To the dinner each guest brings an offering,—one a turkey, another a duck, a third a joint of meat, to which the bride-folks add bread, wine, lights, music, and the galette;* the wedded pair parade the village with a fiddler scraping before them, and their friends following two by two,—the bride usually doing the dismal, and the bride-groom too sometimes. The former decorates her hair—that is if she dares—with the blue flower of the periwinkle; but as it is here considered as the symbol of purity, there are some who, in the bustle of the morning toilette, remember to forget it.

I wish I could tell of the beautiful wedding which a lady of this country described to me with

* A cake.

such graphic touches, that I feel ashamed of not remembering the curious ceremonial. I recollect, however, that the bride was demanded by *ambassadeurs*, as the bridegroom's messengers were styled, and did not appear at the first bidding; but descended at last like Sara, the daughter of Raguel, from the upper chamber. Grain, eggs, and I think apples, were carried before her in the nuptial procession, probably as emblematic of fruitfulness and plenty; and there was something about the mystical number nine, the bearing of which I have now forgotten. Various ceremonies peculiar to the country preceded the sacred ritual; but they have melted into the general picture, which comes to me like a Paul Veronese, with the crimson satin damask stomachers and capulets lined with the same, the gold and silver trimmings and rich stand-on-end petticoats of the bride and her sister, (wealthy peasants of the valley of Ossau,) set off by the grave garments of the matrons, as the gorgeous robes of the great painter are by the dark curtain, or sober velvet of the table covering.

There is a very vivid country gathering every Monday in the market-place of Pau. The prin-

cipal street is a glow of colouring, of which fruit, vegetables, flowers, and capulets form the shades; but the smart cook-maids, with small feet and rakish-looking madrasses, give it too town-like an air. A market in the Pyrenees is the same thing to the country folks, as an Irish assize or an English race-meeting to the provincial belles and beaux: all go to it; some for business, others for pleasure, all in their best gear and best faces. Sometimes the weekly market brings such a throng, that a stranger passing through might guess it to be at least a quarterly fair, if not a yearly one. The little town of Nay, (a pleasant drive from Pau,) with pointed roofs, low slated spires, and arcades full of bustling country life, still as in the time of Marca, *gentille, agréable, et marchande*, cheated us in this way: we thought that we had stumbled on something rare, and found that what we fancied a festival, was merely the usual weekly market. And a very pretty scene it was, all the country folks in their glory, the long street full from end to end, wicker baskets of a neat form and workmanship ranged in rows at each side, and abundantly stored with vegetables; cheese, geese,

homespun cloth, and cotton shawls filled up the intervals; and behind each lot of merchandise sat a grave capulet, or a gayer madrass; or perhaps a stern matron with a dewlap cap, whose loose white chin-border, wagging as she spoke, would have made a grey-beard of the youngest. Unusual smartness visible amongst the capulets, some running into black taffeta quilled down the seams with black net or ribbon, downright domino hoods, which made masqueraders of them. The men, too, were gay: showy handkerchiefs tied loosely round the throat, with a careless Young Meadows sort of air, and as much colouring as possible forced into their usually sober dress. Kindly people all, men and maids; for though I had a huge green fan, spread pent-house fashion over my bonnet to save the necessity of holding up a parasol, which formed certainly a most grotesque head-dress, yet no one laughed, or seemed to think it ridiculous.

The hill above the town and the road farther on were full of market maidens,—two on a horse, eight in a cart, and so on; sometimes a pair of geese, harnessed a-breast like Venus's swans, occupied a

pack-saddle all to themselves; while their more plebeian brethren waddled along the high road, running with such inveterate obstinacy under our wheels, that it required some skill to get on without crushing them.

The object of our morning excursion was to visit the Château d'Angosse. Within two hours' drive (or thereabouts) of Nay, we quitted roads for lanes—and green ones, full of shade and sweetness, with tangled hedges and stumpy oaks, hazels and walnuts, changing to sweet woodland bits of broader shade and character. The lord of the castle, and of the forge valley that dives off from it, was absent; but we picked up his housekeeper in the market-place at Nay, who, knowing one of our party, kindly offered to precede us with the key of the house. She was on foot, so, to accomplish her hospitable purpose, sprang up on the first spare horse that presented itself; and mounting, like a Vendean heroine, with a foot in each stirrup, was off at a round pace, and waiting at her open porch *en vraie chatelaine* to receive us when we arrived. The latter part of the road to the castle is exquisite; broad river-stretches, or gleaming

ones of infinite beauty, the ever-varying mountains, peaked, rounded, in light, in shadow, and clustering together to set off the original and supreme view from the terrace that leads to the airily detached hamlet of St. Paul, whose small slated spire (the common ornament of the villages here) looks down upon the exquisite pastures, the swift and limpid brooks, and beautiful foliage of the vale below.

A little farther on we found the lonesome château; an old-fashioned manor-house, uninteresting in itself, but rising boldly above the valley and towered over by the higher mountains at whose base it stands, and within which it is enclosed, like the petal of a flower in its bell; dark and charming avenues, and mountain lawns, and home terraces, and lemon trees and vines, and a thousand beauties of stream and mill, and hut and tree; but above all, such a sweet character of solitude and peacefulness, strengthened rather than diminished by the monotonous fall of the hammer in the forge below. At first, all farther issue seems sealed up by the closing of the mountains; but the eye at length discovers, between their folds, the opening of a narrow gorge, not accessible to a

carriage, and described to us (for alas! we had not time or means to make acquaintance with it) as full of power and beauty. Deep in the gorge, in the heart of wild and romantic scenery, are the principal iron-works of the Marquis d'Angosse. He is himself now absent; but we tasted the excellent garbure, and profited by the manifold civilities, kindly and heartily offered, of his housekeeper; and, as the same tone usually pervades a family, each member imitating the model immediately above itself, in default of other proof I should not hesitate to judge most favourably of the high-bred and courteous hospitality of the master, by the mere demeanour of his servants. We passed a charming hour or two on his terrace, Boccaccio-ing it deliciously on the grass, and thinking how soft, and still, and lovely its utter solitude would be of an autumn day—a warm and mellow one, with sun-beams but no sun, only the rays stealing out from under the still clouds,—the purple eye-lids that shade the fountain of their light. In winter, when the mountains are covered with snow, and darkness lies upon the hollow, its gloom may be too severe and chilling; yet I can fancy it a happy hunter's

home even then, and can see the blazing fire, the easy chair, the tired dogs, and cheerful supper, through the summer sunbeams.

The housekeeper had no such imaginings,—dreary days, long nights still drearier, paths choked up with snow, and the *forgerons*' ladies exceedingly bad society. Nay still in a bustle as we returned; took the public road, (I mean the great one,) and crossing the bridge, admired the river that tears along from the mountains which close the scene; streams innumerable cross and recross the valley, sometimes *con amore*, at others caught and dyked, to help the purposes of berrêt and hat, and, I believe, cloth making; for the little town of Nay is Dutch in its industry as well as its apparent neatness, and hangs out flowers from its wooden balconies, and Spanish honeysuckle on its walls, very prettily.

March, 1836.—Since the above was written, we have passed many months in a paradise a short distance from Pau; a happy and delicious spot, where the eye and heart made quiet jubilee. I

have verified my sketches, and found them (to my thinking) correct, and assuredly not flattered. It would be no easy matter to overdo the sunset views from our terrace, or the effect of the moon rising between two masses of wood,—heavy and dark as hills, but identified by their outline of foliage,—the silent grove at evening, or the illuminated cupola of the Pic du Midi,* out-topping the fine gathering of mountains that close the southern view.

How often have I sat at fall of night, surrounded by those most dear to me, spelling the beautiful heavens, and looking across the valley at the turreted outline of the castle, traced in darkness on the pale grey sky; while the long tent-like roofs of Pau disappeared gradually from the landscape, and the air came to us loaded with the fragrance of the thousand flowers that grew about, and the broad-leaved catulpa showered down its blossoms at our feet. Sometimes we heard the gentle murmur of the Gave, as it went its way through the valley; sometimes a faint strain of

* The Pic du Midi of Pau; every little town in the mountain Pyrenees has its Pic du Midi, but that of Bagnères de Bigorre is the one par excellence.

music, or the sound of a horn, or the distant roll of the evening drum, borne across at intervals from the opposite town; or the mingled hum from the village of Geloz below, or a sweet voice singing old mournful jacobite melodies in delicious unison with the scene and hour. There are two pines in the landscape—the pines of Bizanos, which I loved to look at when the summer sky was over them, not only for their own sakes, but for the sake too of that sweet land where beauty is most beautiful; and then, when autumn came, how the woods burnished into gold, and the beautiful bid adieu to summer light how it lingered over the Bayonne quarter! O, the red light—or the golden one, how glorious it is!

Every day in this sweet country brings out fresh and unexpected beauties; every accident of light a new charm, every period its individual aspect of sweetness or magnificence; but autumn is its true season of loveliness,—where is it not so? —to my eyes at least, which better love its shaded beauty than the ripe rich glow of summer, or even than the budding sweetness of spring. I love autumn as the dying love life: I feel that it

will not stay long, and dwell on it with a melancholy delight, in which the sense of present love and coming loss are mingled together, giving a touching and unspeakable grace to its simplest beauties. There is a tenderness in its melancholy lights, an almost magical transparency in its clear ones, a poetry in all, which together exercise a powerful influence over the imagination. A farewell is always affecting, but so sweet a one as autumn gives is sad; yet in its sweet sadness there are touches of joy almost heavenly. When I look down on the fading woods, and upwards to the aëreal mountains and the blue sky above them, I feel as if I had nothing left of earth about me but its affections.

It is winter now, but my pines seem to know nothing about it, and to suit themselves to the black sky just as well as to the blue one. I have talked of sweet sounds—summer ones, when the sky flushed warmth and the catulpa shed its blossoms; now we have ungentle ones sometimes, and more ungentle accompaniments. I do not know what we call the *orfraie*—the bold bird that flies against the tempest, be it ever so fierce; but of

all night-birds it is the most alarming. The hootings of the owl are corn-flowers and summer twilight to its wild and desolate cry, and the mournful scream of the sea-gull love's messages. The orfraie, if by itself, seems to consider its solitude as something dangerous or horrible, and shrieks like an aged woman attacked by murderers; when two or three meet, then comes the orgie, and these wicked revellers shout like drunken peasants returning from a fair, or gurgle in their hollow throats like exasperated demons;—I say wicked revellers, because their cry is so full of alarm and crime; and, if such a sound be not the index of a cruel and ferocious nature, voice—which is the speech of birds, is no key to their meanings: the nightingale, instead of a sorrowing true love, may be a rakish flirt; and the gentle robin, whose pretty song is so full of household love, who hops on our window with a crumb of bread in its bill, and bids us good-morrow with its sweet friendly warble, an angry gad-about.

As for the orfraie, whether he be a croaking immorality, or a screaming mentor—sanctimonious as Colonel O'Kelly's parrot, I cannot take upon

me to say; but, such as he is, our grove has never been without him since winter came. Sometimes we have a crew of those midnight visitors, who generally appear with October: at first their shrieks startled me; but I got accustomed to the sound, and soon found their almost human shouts and hysterical laugh not unamusing, though ghastly. But what a sound to hear in the lone depths of a forest at midnight! or from the shrouds of a ship at sea, or from the dark waves that follow it; like the cry of a sea spirit prophesying drearily. I have heard these wizard birds carousing in a storm; but they prefer fine nights, and bully the moon and stars with most unhallowed mockery.

Amongst the old customs still in due observance in the Pyrenees, is one which usually takes place on Shrove Tuesday; when, if there happens to be a man in the country who has received a drubbing from his wife—and put up with it, he is seized upon by some of the sturdiest of his neighbours, placed upon an ass with his face turned towards the tail, and so paraded about; and, I believe, with the additional degradation of an explanatory

paper pinned to the back or breast. The huge Christmas log, steeped in wine, and set round with smaller ones in the form of a cross; the burning brand drawn out of the bonfire on St. John's Eve, and carefully preserved to feed the next year's blaze; the cross of flowers, nailed against the door on the same holy vigil to keep the witches out, are not forgotten in the Pyrenees: the blessed candle is still lighted in a storm; the corn standing in the fields still blest on Rogation Sunday, with prayer, incense, and holy water; St. Roch (or rather his representative) continues to bestow his benediction on the cattle; branches that have been switched in holy water still decorate the cottages at Easter; and many other homely and harmless superstitions, which one loves for their pleasant, old-fashioned associations —delightful ones, I think,—are carefully kept up in this beautiful, believing land. Another thing that I greatly love here is, the way which the people have of dating by their Saint's day; and, instead of saying it was the 5th of December, or the 2nd of February, counting from their calendar of holy records,—as the vigil of St. Nicholas, Le

Chandeleur, (our Candlemas,) the day after St. Martin, or the day of All Souls. The toll of the angelus often brings a thanksgiving to the lips of the shepherd who feeds his flock on the hills, and reminds the labourer in the fields of a pious duty. I have seen a young woman stop in the midst of her household cares, and breathe a short, but I have no doubt heartfelt prayer, when she has heard its distant sound. The invention of this beautiful custom of tolling the angelus at morning, noon, and evening, so that those who are employed in their daily occupations and are far away from churches, may join in thought with those who kneel within them, is due, strange to say, to Louis the Eleventh.

After the maize harvest is over, and the fields cleared, the peasants go about to their neighbours' houses, offering their gratis help to *égrener* * it, and sit up all night in the barn, working, singing, drinking white wine (*vin du pays*), eating chestnuts, and telling stories. This cheerful custom does not belong to the superstitions of the people, but to their sociable and friendly habits, of which they

* To detach the grain from the stalk by friction.

have many, and all of a rustic character and colouring. There is a superstition, and not a pleasing one, which I thought belonged alone to Italy, but which I find is not unknown in the Pyrenees. Yesterday I was warned by a peasant-boy against taking flowers from some children who offered them to me. It was the custom, he told me, for any one who had a friend ill or dying, to tie up a small nosegay and put it into the hand, or the breast, of the sick person; and then offer it to the next comer, or throw it into the first carriage they chanced to meet with. The flowers are supposed to carry off the malady from the person afflicted, and to give it to the one who receives them. If another does not take the infection, the sick person cannot be cured. I had been in many places in Italy where this belief existed, but did not expect to find it here.

Finer things were formerly done in the way of superstítious observances in this country of the Pyrenees, when processions and pilgrimages were the necessities of the day; amongst those shone out the mysteries of Perpignan, long (as we are told) abolished, when the Black Penitents opened

the file, carrying the instruments of Christ's passion, and followed by various groupes exhibiting the flagellation in the judgment-hall, the crowning with thorns, the *Ecce Homo*,—which last was reserved for the nobles, who alone appeared as actors in it. The procession was closed by a person clothed in a violet-coloured robe, who represented our Saviour himself bearing his cross, with the daughters of Jerusalem going before, and a crowd of Roman soldiers, priests, torch-bearers, and musicians following after.

And now a bit of autumn from my apron-pocket notes. October 18th.—Turned out of the high-road, which we had taken for the sake of a sunning, and lighted on the sweet hamlet of Uzos,—a real hamlet; clear brook, embowering trees, and the church with its grave-yard, and a flat stone with the English name of "Susan Day" on it. How the foreign tomb breeds thought, and carries it to the foreign death-bed! Pleasant cottages, or other country dwellings, with a sweet inhabited look, are never wanting here; nor dun cows (a pale harmonious dun) ruminating idly, or flapping off the flies with their long tails. Came home through country

lanes: exquisite meadows, and nothing else,—between us and the côteaux of Jurançon,—mowing, last crop, and the shaven grass without a knot in it; smooth as velvet, green as spring, but a touch of russet on the woods that speaks, as every thing in autumn does,—the air, the sky, the deepening earth, the whistle of the last bird,—to both heart and fancy.

There is something pretty in the Spanish-sounding names of the places here: the valley of Geloz, the pines of Bizanos, the hamlet of Uzos, &c. Autumn fills the country with Spaniards, who beg or work—as it happens: wild and ugly people, but always picturesque.

19th. Donkeyed again:—give me autumn; nothing like it in the muster roll of seasons. An eagle sailed by my window this morning with a proud swim, as if he lay upon the air and commanded it to bear him forward. A now-a-days king, even in his ermine, is a menial in point of dignity to those fine creatures of the sky. I did not know that they came down to the lowlands, but find that my cloud king is an old acquaintance here,—an autumn one. An unimaginable evening as we turned homewards, finer even than the beau-

tiful morning. The Pic du Midi like a rock of precious stone,—all ingrained sapphire. What an altar of thanksgiving!

26th. Our marigolds are richer now than coronation robes: what shades of orange and of brown circling round and round, and concentrating all their hues in the heart of the flower—the common flower—that if it were a rare one would be thought so beautiful! We have still the velvet amaranthus, amber, rich burgundy purple, and ruby, glowing like the inside of a pomegranate or the precious stone itself; and hundreds of lilac, white, and purple things, to me nameless. Dahlias, too, and the fine geranium-tinted ones, *(rose saumonée,)* but not the variety that I have seen in England and other places: barberries like coral ear-drops, and the beautiful yellow-flowering plant which gardeners call cassia; but it is not the sweet, heavy-scented cassia of Provence. The palma-christi has still its grape-like bloom, rich stalk, and broad, graceful leaf; probably the one which the fairies choose when they set about roofing a ball-room. Oberon and Titania might lead off, and all their train follow, lavishly housed under the spread of a single one. Roses—and not all Bengal

ones, verbena and jasmine in full beauty, tube-rose and heliotrope enriching the terrace.

26th. Yesterday was a day for July to boast of; too warm for out-of-doors rambling, and at five o'clock like a sweet summer twilight at Naples. But this morning, such a tempest! At six o'clock it awoke me, as it came rushing up from the valley from Bayonne; sounding as if it was under the earth and above it, and in the heavens, and the trees, and every where. Catulpas, yesterday, full and almost verdant; and to-day the earth is covered with their broad eastern-looking leaf, curiously laid on by the chance wind, with almost the regularity of a carpet pattern.——A fortnight later; what a glorious day! soft glory, like the eyes of an angel: I have never seen one, but can fancy how it is. The forests still beautiful, the oaks green and gold, but the green uppermost; autumn flowers still glowing, and honeysuckle in blow in the hedges.

Companion spring bit, from the same apron-pocket.—March 3rd. Every thing announces the first break of spring in gentle rumours. Linnets, finches, and yellowhammers; some singing, some hopping, all pert and happy, and bright as

the beautiful budding things that already camp in the hedges with the pale but pretty yellow butterfly, and the small blue one or moth-like brown hovering round them. Honeysuckles in full blow in the road-side banks, and periwinkles blue as sapphires mixing with them. Anemonies, daffodils, narcissus, ranunculuses (double), the autumn primrose, which has never left us in the coldest season, violets of Parma and of the fields, polyanthus, and heaps of other sweet, early flowers, some of which have been in bloom for weeks past, enrich the garden. Hedges a mosaic of violets, wild strawberries, the beautiful green of the hellebore, young honeysuckle, *pied de chien*, and the fine leaf of the plant which we call *serpentine*,—large, boldly indented, and of a deep green, marbled with a thread of white, and a delicate natural varnish over all: almonds, in some places in and almost out of blossom, in less favourable spots only budding, and the beautiful single hyacinth—the alabaster of the garden, in abundance; so are all sorts of golden eyes. Sky bright, still, and soft; and in the air a harmony of loving covenants and gentle records. O for the sweet springs and autumns of the south!

CHAPTER XIII.

PAU TO LESTELLE—VILLAGES AND HAMLETS—COARAZE—LESTELLE—SEMINARISTS AND PILGRIMS—BETHARAM—ITS NIGHT SCENES AND MORNING DECORUM—HAWK MOUNTAINS AND EAGLE ONES—THE CASTLE OF LOURDES—OLD STORIES—A MAGNANIMOUS CHATELAIN AND A TREACHEROUS HOST—SOFT SCENES AND HANDSOME WOMEN—THE LOVE OF HOME.

MARCH.—Left Pau after breakfast; the Gave running along with us, and the mountains beckoning us forward. To-day they are like a land of shadows,—beautiful and vague; and the imagination, doubting their reality, asks "Are ye there, friends of my youth? are ye there, who have gone before me?" How often has, not only my fancy but my heart, questioned the passing clouds, the veiled mountains, and read sweet answers in their soft and changeful aspects,—how often, too, sad ones: but when the mind communes with the skies, there is always hope, down even at the root of its despondency; we feel and are sustained by it, though we do not always know that it is there.

At length the vapours disperse, the dark covering of heath becomes visible on the broad sides of the mountains, and the large clouds cast down their shadows in flying sheets on the variegated surface.

An open pleasant country to Lestelle, (three posts from Pau); wide plains of maize mixed with clover and meadow, and intersected or bounded by soft woods, or lines of poplar gracefully broken, villages and farm-houses solidly built, and trimly roofed with slates, wooden tiles, and sometimes thatch, and ornamented at each gable point with a small urn, or a ball, in wood or tin; these same gables (one-windowed sometimes, but often windowless) front the road, and the entrance door opens into the farm-yard, or the garden at the side; flowers, fruit-trees, and Italianized vines, but not much neatness in the arrangement; the farm-yard gate roofed at top in the old-fashioned way, with a repetition of the ornamental urn or ball at each end; a stone tablet usually over the house-door, with a cross, a flower, a star, or perhaps an inscription on it; and the unglazed windows often crossed with stone, as in many of the old towns in France.

The villages in the plains and on the high roads have all the same general character, differing only in the number of their houses, and of course in the beauty or pleasantness of their site. Sometimes a fine tree, or two or three perhaps, (oftenest oaks) decorate a green spot between the houses; and the oak-common is as frequent in some parts of the country as in England,—to say nothing of the goose-green with its rustic shade, and its home look, and its waddling population,—the fattest I have ever seen, but nothing (they say) to those of Lectoure and other places, where (as in Béarn) their unnatural folds of grease and swollen livers form a lucrative branch of commerce.

But it is in the green lane and the by one that the real Béarnais hamlet niches itself; the lane where, as the flock passes, the sheep leaves its wool upon the briars of the hedge, and the cart (if there be room for it) its long locks of hay on the bowery branches. There the brook babbles, and the roof is thatched; there is no scutcheon over the door, no tin ball, no wooden urn,—nothing fine but the gilt Virgin in the chapel, and the vermilioned infant in her arms.

Narrow as the track is, I must back out of it; and here we are again on the high road to Cauteretz,—cultivation and produce; but the best part of the picture, if one may say so, is the frame,—its first border formed by the delicious côteaux for which this region of the Basses Pyrénées is so famed, and the broad outward setting by the majestic mountains ledging backwards into more eminent dignity.

At Coaraze more actual,—I mean immediate beauty; the view from the bridge very lovely, and that from the terrace of the château still (and much) better. Here *Le Béarnais*, consigned to the care of Susanne de Bourbon, Baronne de Missons, his *gouvernante*, ran about with the peasant children bare-headed and bare-footed, ate brown bread, cheese, and garlick, and acquired those hardy habits that stood him in such good stead in after life. Nothing remains of the antique castle but a square tower and, it may be, a part of the walls; the more modern château is, like many others here, an ancient manor-house in aspect; with a side wood cresting the abrupt bank on which it stands; mountains in front, below a rapid

Gave, a mill, a bridge, and around a landscape full of sweetness and dignity. Further on is Lestelle, the last village of Béarn; and soon after Bigorre opens its valleys, the soft forerunners of its high mountain scenery. The priesthood seem to thrive here: passed at Lestelle a flourishing *séminaire:* windows turned to the road, and each, or nearly each, with a sleek figure in it; no apostolical heads, or diabolical ones either, but a show of round and rosy novices, looking as if they had a large stock of mental reservations, and could account for the cards in their sleeves as well as the Père André himself. Just opposite to this ecclesiastical forcing-house, the Gave makes a rapid sweep, and rushing through a single arch hung with streaming foliage, murmurs a hoarse accompaniment to the pious reveries of the youthful seminarists and their devout instructors,—pious or mundane, perhaps both; palms, crowns, and the shadowing wings of angels above; and beneath, the court confessional, the mitre, and the red hat.*

* The seminary no longer exists, the incipients sent elsewhere, and the house (to which a showy church is attached) consigned to missionaries and Spanish capucins.

Two or three months later, and the priests will be effaced by the pilgrims. On a mountain near to Lestelle is the chapel of Bétharam,* to which at certain periods of the year a pilgrimage is performed,—a pilgrimage of love, devotion, and jollity; where, after tears and prayers, and many outward acts of humility and contrition, comes a night spent pell-mell in the forest; a sort of camp-meeting, where litanies are mingled with sounds of unhallowed revelry, and the groans, and hymns, and murmured "Hail, Mary!" of the penitent and the devout, rise up amidst the licentious mirth of those who, using religion as a pretext, make orgies of its festivals. In the wildness or the stillness of the night, this scene, set off by the dark flying clouds or the red moon of an autumnal sky, must be strange and striking: lamps glimmering through the trees, marking false and misguiding tracks, and seeming to lengthen distance; fires burning on the edge of the forest, strange figures and strange sounds issuing from its undefined depths, must, combined with the accidents of light and darkness, produce a powerful effect, though one more in

* In the language of the country, *beautiful shade*.

unison with the mysteries of demonology, than with the pure and vestal spirit of true religion.

Basques, Béarnais, peasants from the mountains and valleys of Bigorre, often from those of Arragon or Catalonia, crowd to the holy chapel to beg a boon, or fulfil a vow, at the shrine of Our Lady of Bétharam,—the women covered with rosaries and scapulars; the men linked together arm-in-arm, chaunting their litanies, as they pass along, with most untuneable vehemence. Mary, "the blessed amongst women," is here, as in Italy, the almost exclusive object of adoration with the people of the mountains; in her they worship at once the chosen woman and the more than angel, claiming human tenderness from the one, and from the other divine protection.

In speaking of the night scenes of the mountain pilgrimages, (for Bétharam is but the duplicate of Heas, &c.), I have kept down my colouring, subduing as much as possible the strong tints which preceding sketchers, French too and eye-witnesses, have used to paint them with. True colours, every one tells us; but I must in justice add that some friends of ours, who trooped it there once with the pilgrims, found every thing as matter

of fact and prosaic as well could be. Great buying of rosaries and of crucifixes, and of toilette helps, too; neck pins and sevignés, and other ornaments prettily imagined though of flimsy materials; but no enthusiasm, pious or otherwise,—no overflowings. It is true they were morning visitors, and did not wait for the inspirations even of twilight; but sober common-place was the order of the meeting,—at least while the sun shone.

A wooded valley, green and lonesome, opens at Lestelle. As we entered it, a hawk flew above our heads, and turning its yellow wings to the sun, floated over the woods like an autumn leaf. Old Vestris said beautifully of Taglioni, "Elle ne tombe pas, elle descend;" and certainly no artificial movements ever emulated the type which nature has given us in her winged creation, so happily as hers do: but my hawk lies upon the air as even Taglioni cannot; and its broad-winged downward flight, in which the will seems to act almost without muscular exertion, is grand and graceful beyond all human imitation.

I have always felt a strange and mysterious emotion on entering into the secrets of a mountain region, which has seemed but a little before like

something shadowy and unapproachable, a sort of going home of the soul. A grave and melodious voice speaks within it, welcoming strange scenes as if they were native ones, owning them as familiar, though we know not where they have been so, and hailing them with something of the sweet but serious joy with which the dead, who lived on earth, may meet in heaven. I feel it now, as the valleys of the Pyrenees open to receive us, and in its softest potency; for these are not mountains whose aspect threatens or appals, like those which I have sometimes seen in alpine countries, and never without an intense feeling of awe; they are to such, as the hawk, which still poises itself in the air above us like a messenger of vague but beautiful promise, is to the majestic eagle of those sterner regions. But all is enchanted ground, the revel ground of thought and fancy. I have long given away my heart to mountains; and though I may coquet it with the decorated bowers of art, yet the deep joy, the joy of ever-working thought, enamoured of the spirit which haunts the one, refuses to come at the butterfly bidding of the other.

The chain of low hills (the beautiful côteaux of which I have already spoken) that rises up immediately from the vale of Pau, is the first step of the great ladder; then comes the lower range of the Basses Pyrénées,—my hawk mountains, through whose avenues we ascend gradually, until we arrive at the great eagle ones: but we are not there yet, nor half-way scarcely; but as we get on they open before us, and the swift mind, outrunning the lagging body, has already made companionship with the mysteries of the shadowy region where Nature reveals herself in visions, and all the magic that dissolves in the open sunshine of the plains is made manifest.

The Gave is here all life and sparkle, and its sweet and varied banks a breathing pastoral. Overhanging it is the little town of St. Pé, once remarkable for its monastery, founded and richly endowed by Sance Guillaume, Duke of Gascony, who dedicated it to God, and to St. Peter, the prince of apostles, very Italian, with a squandering of marble about the humble door and windows, a ruinous-looking piazza, partly if not entirely surrounded by arcades, with bulged

balconies full of wet rags and broken flower-pots, and a dingy population in half-mourning, —black and white, or all black, being the favourite dress of the country folks. It has besides a castle, or its vestiges, and onwards a beautiful up-and-down country, with the Gave playing at hide and seek through low green meadows, or along the base of the fine up-spreading woods that cover the hills, and sometimes two thirds of the mountains behind them, with their amplitude of shade.

The castle of Lourdes, which guards the entrance to the high Pyrenees, stands on a bold perch in a lonely pass of the valley, with a hot town clambering up after, or rather on one side of it, whose roofs seem to quiver in the vertical sunbeams. The castle itself is one of the historical features of the Pyrenees; it has been the servant of many masters, erected (as it is believed) by the Romans, possessed by the Counts of Bigorre, afterwards by Simon de Montfort, and for a long period by our Edward the Third, to whom it was made over at the peace of Bretigny, when King John of France (taken prisoner at the battle of

Poitiers) was redeemed from captivity; and with the English it remained, as long as they continued to retain any part of their possessions in Aquitaine.

It was a brave garrison that of Lourdes, and when the wars of Guyenne were renewed, kept its stand famously; and many a Robin Hood *chevauchée* did the merry men make from their stronghold, laying the whole country round under contribution, as Messire Espaing pleasantly recounted to Messire Jehan Froissart, as they journeyed peacefully along from the city of Paumiers to the town of Orthez.* The Abbot of Gascony, and his four monks, who put up at the hostel of the Angel at Montpellier, and would insist on treating the honest Sire Barenger to his journey to Paris, is worthy of Don Raphael and his co-mate Ambroise de Lamela. To speak truth, the chieftains of those days were little more (the ceremonies of war apart) than hardy freebooters, with troops to match them; who were singularly expert at running away with their enemies, and holding them fast till the ransom came.

In the broils of Béarn, Foix, Armignac, &c.,

* Chroniques de Froissart.

and even in the higher-pinioned wars of Aquitaine, when those lawless bands, called free companions, lived on plunder, and, selling their services to the best bidder, scoured the country in the name of one bold captain or another, this irregular mode of warfare was tremendous work sometimes. But the jolly garrison of Lourdes seemed to have liked fun, at least as well as bloodshed and battery. Here are a Gascon's reasons for loving the service of the English king better than the French one; he had served the first in Aquitaine, and had turned round to the last,—"Dieu mercy ie me porte assez bien; mai i'auoye plus d'argent (et aussi auoient mes gens) quande ie faisoye guerre pour le roy d'Angleterre, que ie n'ay maintenant; car, quand nous cheuauchiōs à l'aventure, nous trouuions aucuns marchans riches de Toulouze, de Condon, de la Riolle, ou de Bergerath. Tous les iours nous ne faillons point, que nous n'eussions quelque bonne prise, dont nous étions frisques et jolis."

There is a fine trait recorded in the archives of Lourdes,—a calm and glorious one; and is not the calm of courage more glorious than its storm?

more morally grand, as more detached from passion, more rising out of the root of principle? —to me it seems so. I have always found something amazingly noble in that courage, which, after having examined, counted, weighed the dangers it has to face, ends by despising them—or better still—by opposing them with a cool firmness, nothing shaken by the perfect knowledge of their magnitude.

When the Black Prince sojourned at Tarbes with his fair wife, it came into his fancy to visit the castle of Lourdes, which, from its remarkable strength, and the facilities afforded by its frontier position of access into Arragon and Catalonia, ranked as a strong-hold of material consequence. When he had well examined it, he called to him a certain knight of his household, who had served him loyally and in whom he had entire faith, a native of Béarn, named Pierre Ernaut, a man expert at arms, and cousin of the famous Gaston Phœbus Comte de Foix, and thus addressed him: "Messire Pierre, à ma venue en ce pays ie vous institue et fay Chatelain et Capitaine de Lourde, et Regard du pays de Bigorre. Or gardez tellemēt le

chastel que vous en puissiez rẽdre bō cōpte à Monseigneur mon pere, et à moy."—"Monseigneur," dit le cheualier, "volōtiers." La lui en fit foy et hōmage: et le Prince l'en mit en possessiō. And well he merited the trust. For when war broke out again between the kings of France and England, and two powerful barons of Bigorre—Marnaut Barbesan, and the Sire d'Anchin, having gone over to the French side, seized upon the castle and city of Tarbes, feebly defended for the king of England, Pierre Ernaut held out bravely, nor could he in any way be tempted to swerve from the duty to which he had bound himself. When the Duke d'Anjou laid siege to Lourdes, in 1374, the town was taken and burned, but all his efforts against the castle were fruitless. Then did the Count de Foix, whose interest it was to obtain the favour of the duke, send for his cousin, the captain and chatelain of the fortress, who, seeing no means of disobeying the mandate, set out, but with sore misgivings, for Orthez; where he was courteously received and sumptuously entertained by his noble host. After four days of feasting and revelling, the Count de Foix, in the presence of several of

his courtiers, thus addressed his guest:—" Ie vous ay mandé, Pierre; et vous estes venu. Sachez que Monseigneur d'Anjou me veut grand mal pour la garnison de Lourde que vous tenez, et biē pres en a esté ma terre toute courue: si ce n'eussent esté aucuns bons amis, que n'ay eus en sa cheuauhée, et sa parolle, et l'opinion de plusieurs de sa compagnie qui me hayent, disans que ie vous soustien, pourtant que vous estes de Béarn, et ie n'ay que faire d'auoir la malveuillance de si haut Prince, comme est Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou. Si vous fay commandment en tant que vous vous pouuez meffaire enuers moy, et par la foy et l'hommage que vous me deuez, que le chastel de Lourde vous me rendez."

Quand le Cheualier ouït cette parolle, il fut tout ébahy, et pensa vn petit, pour savoir quelle chose il respondroit, car il veoit bien que le Comte de Foix parlut à certes. Toutesfois tout pensé et consideré, il dit, " Monseigneur, vrayemēt ie vous doy foy et hommage, (car ie suis un poure Cheualier de vostre sang et de vostre terre,) mais le chastel de Lourde ne vous rēdraye-ie ià, vous m'auez mādé, si pouuez faire de moy ce qu'il vous plaira, ie le tiens du Roy d'Angleterre, qui m'y a

mis et estably, et à personne, qui soit, ie ne le rendray, fors à luy."

Quand le Comte de Foix ouït ceste response, si luy mua le sang de felonnie et de courroux, et dit en tirāt hors vne dague; "Ho, ho! traistre, as tu dit que non? par ceste teste tu ne l'as dit pour riens. Et adonc ferit il de sa dague sur le Cheualier par telle façon qu'il le navra moult vilainemēt en cinq lieux, n'il n'y auoit là Baron ne Chevalier, qui osast aller au devant." Le Cheualier disoit bien; "Ha, ha! monseigneur, vous ne faites pas gentillesse, vous m'auez mandé, et m'occiez. Toutes fois il eut ces cinq coups d'vne dague. Si commanda le Comte qu'il fut mis en la fosse: et y fut mis, et y mourut, car il fut pouremēt curé de ses playes."

The brave and faithful chatelain lay dead in the fosse; but the castle of Lourdes was not the more the Duke of Anjou's for that; for Pierre Ernaut had left a brave and unflinching brother behind him, Jean de Béarn, to whom he had entrusted the command in his absence, and whom, (foreseeing the treachery of the Comte de Foix,) he had made take an oath to defend it for King Edward to the

last gasp. An oath gallantly kept: and the duke finding himself repulsed at all points, raised the siege, and turned his arms in another direction.

Some sweet preliminaries introduce Lourdes; grey rocks—not the worse for a little severe penciling,—pleasant fields, a winding river, and, at the opening of the valley, the castle all alone on the rock, and the rock with its base in the green and running water. Soft meadowy openings; still, verdant, and umbrageous; and after the grey rocks the green valleys, and the ever-graceful and beautiful Gave, and the soft hill-sides openly wooded, and the sheltered crags behind.* Farther on, a profuse and vagrant vegetation; large oaks, too, and the rocks and ruins, the fresh streams and fertile pastures of the charming valley of Argelez—the first and loveliest of the Lavedan,—with a wide chain of lofty Alps darkening the distance, some clear or streaked across with clouds, others looking through a veil thin as the gauze of the morning. A rich tufting of box on the rocks, and a velvet

* Guide-books talk of grottoes and a lake near to Lourdes; but we did not see either, so I cannot say whether or not they merit a visit.

darkness in the atmosphere, as we approach the great mountains, ineffably lovely; the walnut and Spanish chestnut in great growth and beauty, and the fig and vine making fellowship with the homelier pear and russet.

There are days especially favourable to beauty, when almost every woman that one meets seems handsome; others, when the run of ugly faces is equally remarkable. I have observed this in public gardens, ball rooms, &c., a hundred times,—so no doubt have others,—without being able to account for it; this is beauty-day; the women of Lourdes looked like a picked battalion, but confident, with fierce madrasses tumbling over their handsome eyes; a challenging head-dress of a piece with their faces.

What a delicious country this is, and how the people of it must love their homes! and when chance sends them from it, how they must remember, like the children of Israel, their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills, and think of the cold flowing waters of their valleys; and having known and loved such things, how they must turn away mournfully from others!

Yet, after all, it is not because our native land is beautiful that we love and long for it, but because it is our own. I once saw a man sitting by a cold hearth in a cabin built of loose stones, through which the wind blew where it listed, and so thinly thatched that the rain came in at one side and made pools on the floor. He was an Irish beggar, and the guardian of a holy well, once much frequented, but his saint having fallen into disrepute, his trade was low: however, he had a warm corner yet, (he said,) pointing to a part of the clay-floor which was not positive mud; and as to the roof, he would put some big stones on it before the winter came, and make it tidy. His food was potatoes, often not overmuch of those; but he observed, that it was ten times better than England, any way. England was fine, but there was no heart in the place; by which I suppose he meant bones, for he exclaimed, "From my own door I can see the place where my father and my grandfather are buried; and though the land I live upon belongs to a stranger, it was every foot of it our own in King James's time." Calypso's island would have been no recompense to this poor man for the

loss of the old land, and the graves, and the holy well which he swept round daily and garnished, even though no pilgrims came to it. How beautifully are all things ordained! The barren moors never brightened by flowers, the cold sea shore where the salt weed clings to the glistening rock, are as dear to the heart of whose first feelings they were mute witnesses, as the paradise of Argelez to those who have been cradled in its beauty.

CHAPTER XIV.

VALLEY OF ARGELEZ — BEGGARS — PIERREFITTE — THE GORGE OF CAUTERETZ—CAUTERETZ—WATERING-PLACE IMPORTUNITY.

THE valley of Argelez, renowned for its beauty and beautiful as its renown, which few vaunted things are, opens with the tower of Vidacoz, and taking at once its full breadth, spreads into a basin, whose only visible entrance is through the gorge of Lourdes. It is a soft home-scene of peaceful and abundant loveliness, overlaid with broad meadows and fields of grain, and full of the soft imagery of pastoral life, cheerful habitations, cattle, woods, and streams; gaining a high poetical character from the mountains which enclose it, and a gentle and lovely one from the border hills that, detached from the loftier heights, lapse along, advancing their wooded sides towards the eye, or retreating from it to shelter the low roof or the slender spire within their rooky hollows. One

upland has a ruin, another a hamlet, a third a chapel, a fourth a convent-looking house with an old church clinging to it; it is the Abbey of St. Savin, or was once; and how beautiful it is, seen from the road! though not like an abbey either; but like a lovely spot to live and die in, looking upwards to the mountains and the sky, and down upon the swelling fields, dressed in that air of quiet abundance that comes out of the overflowing of fruitfulness.

What a poet's dream it would be to live in one of the loneliest niches of this valley, for the sake of the hours of thought to which such a scene of sweetness, and such a life of leisure, might give bright spring and dear continuance; neighbouring the mountains, angling in the stream, and nursing oneself (as old Isaac did) with pleasant fancies and sweet homely images, that turn out poetry when one is not thinking about it; while a neat hand in the cottage on the pebbly brink savours the simple supper, and the bright fire-light, seen through the open door, tells of its preparation. If I was a poor student, and a young one, instead of being a woman, and no youth, I think I should desire nothing better. But there are two things necessary

to make such a life a happy one,—a meditative spirit and a contented mind: to which I would add the faculty of admiration, which finds beauty and good in objects, that to common natures seem barren of either.

The little town of Argelez is in a charming position, suiting its sweet climate, which is said to be the mildest in the mountain districts, the Pisa of the Pyrenees, where the snow (we are told) never lies for more than a few hours. By and by we shall return and look about us here, for the country round is too lovely to be merely passed through. Great beauty towards Pierrefitte and about it; fine undulating mountain-screens and dark defiles, leading the mind into the land of promise. A board, hung up at the inn gate, informs travellers that "la mendicité est ici défendue;" and as a proof of the respect paid to the prohibition, a crowd of unfortunate creatures gathered round us, each clamorously producing some undeniable certificate of wretchedness.* But of what may we not be vain in this world! A

* The prohibition has (I conclude) been since enforced; nothing visible now but little girls, who assail passers by with nosegays.

poor boy in the crowd shows his maimed hand, and has scarcely done so, when a woman pushes in before him; and, eyeing the twisted limb with contempt, cries out, "It is nothing! Look at this child in my arms: she has the legs of a goat!" There is no suffering in her voice, no pity, no sense of peculiar misfortune: the tone of triumph is unmixed. Madonna Donati scarcely threw back "the maiden's veil" more proudly, than the mendicant her cloak; in her earnestness to prove her child's pre-eminence in deformity, she absolutely forgets to beg,—her whole soul is in her glory. I do believe there are some people for whom sorrow is too deep a feeling; who are (as Shakspeare says) "incapable of their own distress:" this woman is, I think, one of them.

But beggars are in general careless thinkers: had she been a hard-working mother, the poor child would have hung upon her (as well it might) like a grief; but trading beggars turn their troubles to account, and when the shame is over—if it ever has been there,—prefer starving liberty and open air, to better-fed servitude and confinement. Begging is, like gaming, an exciting trade:

the beggar turns out in the morning to play his game of hazard, has a run of luck, follows it up with spirit; begs for his supper, his brisk fire, his evening draught, as others game for them; if ill luck comes, abuses it, but hopes for better; every moment is a fresh chance, every face that approaches, a turn of the cards: like the gamester, chance is his fountain of hope; but unlike him, the beggar risks nothing. Thus his spirits are kept afloat, and if he can but raise the supplies, he is never scrupulous about the means by which he does so,—his own eloquence, or his child's infirmities,—no matter which, or what.

There are beggars whom real distress forces from the hovel where shame would have detained them; of such I would be the last to speak lightly, but the accomplished professors are fair game. A friend of mine once accosted the celebrated *asker* at the end of the Rue de Richelieu, with a brief inquiry as to his dinner that day, "Et le roti—un rognon de veau—n'est ce pas?"—"Pardon, monsieur; un gigot de pré salé, si je me souviens bien:" i. e. mutton fed on salt marshes, and reckoned peculiarly delicate.

At Pierrefitte a dark mountain separates the gorge of Luz (often called the valley of Barèges) from that of Cauteretz. We entered the latter by a very steep road overhanging the border of green meadows that lie along the brink of the river. This is the place to talk of clear brooks and jibing streams, flying off mockingly from the eye that would fain keep up with their swiftness. Higher up, the gorge narrows, and the rocky sides are wooded down to the edge of the waters, which go on battling their way through some fine deep-toned scenery. Here are the climbing lawns, bright verdure, and single trees of Switzerland; and the sound of the rough torrent coming up from below, and mingling with the song of birds in the wild bushes. Lindens and ash-trees beautiful, making bowers over the boiling stream; but beautiful above all the green uplands,—satin, velvet, emerald—what you will, nothing too bright for the comparison; dotted lightly over with huts of rude construction, but so much more in keeping with wild spots than trimmer things, and so softly coloured. They are not habitations, but sheds for fodder, and are usually shaded by bou-

quets of foliage, or half hidden by the airily branching walnut, or the dark boughs of the oak or chestnut tree, through which the dusky gable or homely thatch comes peeping with its ballad of a shepherd's life written on it. There is one spot on the left bank of the torrent, a rare one, with a cabin on it, so shaded, so literally and deliciously embosomed, that——But I grow too young, and besides see somebody tittering in the corner: so mum!

There is no faculty of the mind so fluctuating (I mean with respect to external objects) as judgment, so influenced by immediately preceding impressions. After a long stay at Paris, and a journey through an open country, our fancies, though pulled up by the valleys of Béarn, are still perhaps not sufficiently screwed to the comparison pitch to estimate justly. This close defile into which we have just passed from the wide and fruitful valley of Argelez, seems to us almost like a sunshiny hundredth cousin—(mind *hundredth*) of the Via Mala; this probably comes from corn-fields and vineyards, and white daisies and yellow butter-cups, and diminished fancies breeding weak

comparisons, and so on. The sun, who does not love the Via Mala, makes, at certain hours of the forenoon, a scene of his own of this gorge, pouring broad daylight into it, and burnishing up its high bits and edges into marvellous brightness; from all which it comes, that though deep, sometimes sterile, and—but for its torrent—still and sullen too, when the noon is passed; yet there is, if I may so express myself, a character of resignation about it, as if it would let the sky do as it pleased, and make it sad or cheerful at will,—perhaps the most opposite of all aspects to the stationary and mysterious gloom and brooding grandeur of that startling solitude, with whose might and majesty I have incautiously associated this comparatively gentle, though striking and impressive scene.

Another steep and twisted ascent, called Le Limaçon, makes our springs creak; but the road itself is good, and by and by a better one is to be cut through the hill, which will level matters, or at least soften them: marble quarries at the Limaçon and sombre hollows, pines running up the mountains in irregular triangles, or in dark lines multiplied till they become masses. After the Limaçon,

the mountains lose in grandeur and in beauty, but redeem their character as we approach Cauteretz, looking boldly over each other's shoulders, and one with a fine pyramidal front closing up the valley.

Higher up in the gorge we found the little town of Cauteretz lying along the edge of a sparkling torrent that still calls itself by the general name of Gave. The mountains form a basin, receiving the cluster of habitations within its hollow, and just allowing room for itself and its meadows to take their places on the brink of the river, which dashes on without slackening its pace to inquire if the houses have room enough. The fancy, though somewhat repressed by the close vicinity of those natural ramparts, is not chilled by monotony; the folds of the mountains are noble, multiplied, and graceful; the lines free and varied; pleasant woods and green lawns hang about, making bright points and lighting up the heavy masses; and cabins, not so elaborately pictureseque as the chaumières of the Swiss Alps, but all that is necessary for the scene, repose as if by invitation on the most agreeable spots.

Cauteretz, though by no means in the highest class of mountain scenery, is grandly guarded;

the majestic and beautiful Pic de Pegeyra, fills up the head of the valley, making a fine natural pyramid wooded from the base to the peak, and presenting itself with a lordly, yet not unwinning aspect. It is a sweet little goat's-whey sort of place, almost at the end of its world, and with few visitors at present,—for which we return thanks. When we stopped at the hotel, I felt no small alarm; all the horrors of a watering-place came upon me:—washer-women thrust in their list of prices, hawkers their list of goods; some hoped to furnish us with cream, others pressed us to subscribe to the *Cercle;* one man burst into the room, assuring us that he was the original *Wauxhal*, and two capuleted matrons, who had been long prowling about the door, had all but made good their spring, when I took leave to turn the key on their project, and shut them out. At supper we were serenaded by some wandering minstrels from the old troubadour country of Toulouse,—no mean musicians, and so we overlooked their intrusion; though two violins and a guitar in the half-open door way, and a bowing child holding out her canister, are not always the most desirable addi-

tions to the regular inn supper of roast chicken and fricandeau, which, though probably the exact repetition of the early dinner, is sure to be attacked with a ready appetite, that could well dispense with lookers on.

This morning we turned into an angle dignified by the appellation of *La Place*, and the hubbub has subsided into the repose that becomes a nook in the mountains.

CHAPTER XV.

CAUTERETZ, CONTINUED—LA PLACE DE CAUTERETZ—MINERAL SPRINGS—CHAISES A PORTEUR—NEW MODE OF BEGGING—DEARTH OF WALKS—THE PARC—CLIMATE—COUNTRY LADS—WHY HANDSOMER THAN COUNTRY LASSES—HUNTERS OF THE PRESENT TIME AND THE PAST—OWLS AND WISDOM—THE BALLAD—WORDS AND MEANINGS.

THE scene which passes every day in our angle is not without character. As soon as the sun is abroad, the red capulets begin to move about loiteringly, each with a small distaff, or a bundle of worsted to sell; they are chiefly strangers, who come here for the benefit of the waters, bringing with them the portable implement of industry, the aforesaid distaff, without which a countrywoman of the Pyrenees is rarely seen. These red hoods are always in evidence; but dealers from Barèges, who come over the mountains with their light warm shawls, dresses, &c. of the stuff especially

called *barèges*, and their pretty knit counte
mingle with them, showing off their war
tempting ramblers, already overloaded, to bu
they afterwards do not know what to d
The first sunbeams see the chairmen (w
between the town and the baths) flying c
their fragile machines and muffled lading
nish shepherds, who step in from Arragon t
of the springs, stand about grandly, flingi
blankets round them with the air of Ve
cavaliers; madrassed girls run up and do
cakes or coffee; herdsmen of the mountains
their merchandise, consisting perhaps of
small cheeses, soft and curdy, each tied
clean white cloth, and suspended in a ro
pole which the bearer carries on his should
every moment a window opens, and a nim
gered knitter throws her stocking over the
or a blind is closed against the attacks
strengthening sun.

Sometimes the drum beats, as it were, t
but it is only the *valet de ville* who pr
an order of the mayor, a dog strayed, or
stolen. Sometimes a party full of pic-nic

pations, dash by to break merry-thoughts, and if possible hearts, in the shades of the Pont d'Espagne. Perhaps the mystery of the merry-thought may not be known here; but I once heard a pretty little girl say, (talking of a pic-nic,) "You can't think how delightful it was; we had so many cold chickens, and we did nothing but break the funny-bone (i. e. merry-thought), to find out who should be married first." At mid-day windows are carefully shut, blinds closed, and (according to the general custom in southern countries) light and air carefully excluded; a few native peasants looking in their flat berrêts as Highland as auld Robin Grey, and a light sprinkling of capulets, are the only things in movement; but as evening draws on, come motion, freshness, and colouring; huge Spanish-looking coaches arrive, stuffed with passengers, chiefly peasants or persons of the poorer classes, who come here for a course of baths, and bring their live-stock with them in paniers,—cocks, hens, ducks, enough to feed their proprietors during their stay: the same room serves for all, and the bipeds are killed off as occasion requires.

Often four or five of these coaches arrive together,

and discharge their cargoes under our windows. Some are made up of poor strangers, who look about with a cloudy, perplexed air, as if they knew not where to go to; others of luckier folks, who find friends waiting for them, and are off after a hug, and a shake-out of the garments. A few have a parting squib with the driver, who being probably paid for his places before hand, usually leaves such fares to take care of themselves. But when a berline or calèche arrives, then comes the tug of war, and the clatter of swift feet on the pavement; lodging-letters, traiteurs'-maids, and washerwomen, are all in commotion; and if the carriage happens to have an outside step, like the chariot of an old-fashioned physician, the most alert instantly jumps upon it, and thrusts in *her* card; while a dozen others pull at the tail of her petticoat, or try to fling in *theirs* over her shoulder.

Pretensions considered, apartments are dearer here than in Paris: four or five hundred francs a month is frequently given for apartments, which would not there, with the same poor and insufficient furniture, bring two. As the season lasts only two or three months, the house proprietors

consider themselves as perfectly justifiable in making the most they can of their brief harvest; with September, all is over: in the early part of the month the great clearance takes place, if it has not been before-hand with it; and those who linger on to the end are usually quiet people of the country, not worth plucking. A little later, the bears come down and do the honours of the mineral springs to each other; and the communication with Pierrefitte (the only carriage one which Cauteretz has with the world) is blocked up against wheels, and often, if the snow lies deep, against feet also. Those who remain, live (we are told) something as the farmers do in the fell dales of Cumberland, packed up with their live stock; while the lucky ones, who can afford to strike tents, take up their winter-quarters at Tarbes, or Lourdes, and wait there for the general dissolution.

Mineral springs abound here, but the popular one is La Rallière, (an easy walk from Cauteretz, and higher up in the valley,) where there is a handsome bathing establishment. At half-past seven this morning, perhaps much earlier, the colonnade on which the baths open was thronged

with invalids, all putting a good face on the matter. I did not see a crutch, nor a single visage of the true Cheltenham tarnish, which made me reflect on the blessings that we derive from our East India possessions. The waters of the Rallière have the reputation of working wonders in bilious and rheumàtic, as well as various other maladies; perhaps the morning air, gentle exercise, and healthful life led here, though they do not share the honours of the cure with the hot springs, may go quite as far in promoting it.

A rough straw chair upon poles, with two or three hoops stretched over it, and covered with a thin floor-cloth, is the usual conveyance of the sick or the lazy; and from the equal, alert, and exercised step of the chairmen, becomes a most agreeable one. Quite a coming-and-going bustle on the road to the Rallière this morning. In one chair an old sibyl of most sorceress-like aspect, wrapped in her black capuchon, the scarlet lining slightly visible, and nothing wanting but a few cabalistic characters on her broad forehead-cloth; in another, a young officer, with whom the ugly guns seemed to have made foul work; in a third,

a weighty dame, *en papillotes*, concealing her unarranged charms under a thick green veil; two children squabbling in a fourth, with a girl trotting along by their side talking unavailing reason; and behind, a file of bonneted nightcaps that said nothing.

Many were on foot covered with their long mantles. There is something very striking in the front view of this mantle, and very noble in the broad unbroken fold that falls from the head to the feet, giving a grand and mystical effect to the distant solitary figure, which, as it is seen descending the mountain path thus enveloped, looks like a veiled Isis just stepped down from its pedestal. Higher up than the Rallière is the spring of the Mahourat; and higher still, that of Bois. The Mahourat is particularly mild, and probably does neither good or harm; but this valley is so rich in mineral springs, boasting so many, and of such various virtues, that every malady incident to human nature may hope to find a remedy, or at least an alleviation within its bosom. Should the Mahourat, or the Petit St. Sauveur, be too feeble, there is la Rallière, le Bois, le César, les Espagnols,

le Bruzaud, and I do not know how many more; in short, every meadow, every hill, has its source or sources.

As we returned, a woman, who was making hay in a field by the road side, threw off a few notes in a high shrill key that made the air ring. She was not golden-mouthed; but I thought her song might be one of the Pyrenees, and remembering the exquisite melody that E—— picked up in the mountains, listened anxiously. But the words soon became too distinctly audible to admit of any romantic associations: it was neither more nor less than a petition for a halfpenny, trolled out with a sort of Lucy Locket sauciness; and with a laugh at the end of it, which showed the petitioner's carelessness as to the success of her *date obolum*. But, joke or earnest, there is (I suspect) a begging tendency here, though perhaps no stark, arrant, downright beggars. The children are ingenious tormentors: this evening a little girl, sleek and saucy as a page, asked me for a sous; L—— gave her two, and she immediately cried out, "N'avez vous pas un autre?" which, it appears, is not an unusual translation of our 'thank you,' in these

pastoral regions. He refused her for conscience-sake, and off she sprang like a chamois, and joining a group who sat decorating a bank in a hay-field close by, clustering their gay madrasses, and making a point somewhat brighter than a patch of tulips, seized on another girl, and whirled her round on the sharp edge of a steep descent, gathering the wind in her full petticoat, and lavishing her rough graces with much more effect than her ungainly figure, seen in its stillness, seemed capable of producing.

If a walk in the meadows were feasible, it would be lovely; for they are worked in with flowers of a thousand hues, and every tuft of grass is ornate with bright greenhouse-looking things, that tempt the eye to run in delightfully among them; in which pleasant excursion it would be followed by the feet, did not innumerable rills cross and recross each other at every ten or twenty paces, moistening the turf so effectually, that sometimes a dry spot is as hard to find as in the days of Noah's dove. Notwithstanding the inconveniences attending this exuberant irrigation, the eye reposes with gratitude on the beautiful verdure nourished by its abun-

dance. It is not the uniform verdure of Switzerland, but the meadows have a charming freshness; and here and there in the hollows, or lying on the sides of the mountains, are patches of green that look like carpets of rich velvet spread by dewy fingers.

The chief want here is of a greater variety of near walks; if a path winds along the base of a mountain, it is probably so rugged as to be almost impassable, at least for an invalid; a stroll along the banks of the wild river is still less practicable; so that, if the road that leads towards Pierrefitte (at this moment the favourite promenade) does not take the fancy, or that it tires of the one that leads to the Rallière, there is nothing left but the Parc, beautiful as far as it goes, and forming a sweet and quiet selvage to the high hills; but not extensive or varied enough to prevent the roving wish from outstripping its limits.

In the evening, when the air is still warm and full of melody, this walk is particularly pleasing; the murmur of the bright and beautiful Gave encircles every thing, filling up all pauses of sound, yet becoming itself, from the very constancy of its

rush, as unperceived as stillness. The birds, with busy or with skimming wing, work their way homewards, each after its own fashion; some with uninterrupted flight, others making every bough a resting-place; while the shadows spreading upwards over the face of the mountains, seem to follow the last sunbeam as it fades away from its summit.

This is a delight of a climate,—such mornings and evenings! fresh as the shade-loving flowers, but without either cold or humidity; and the hottest hours tempered by a soft stirring air, that revives without exciting. If climates were to be described by flowers, as feelings, wishes, passions are in oriental countries, I would express in sun-loving garlands of the Persian dahlia, the rich rose, the warm pomegranate, the glow and fervour of the balmy south, where the Mediterranean glitters; but for the Pyrenees I would reserve hare-bells and violets, brook-springing daisies, and the cool convolvulus; and if I could find 'a little western flower,' a modest grey one, with a blush of evening red upon its leaves, I would add it to my wreath as a symbol of twilight, usually the only

charm wanting to a southern climate, but enjoyed here in something of its protracted sweetness.

Met some very fine men to-day, superb specimens of the peasant of Bigorre, with Tam O'Shanter bonnets, and hair floating. "I saw my Jamie's wraith" over and over again, but no Jeannie. I take it for granted that much less of the raw material of beauty goes to make a handsome man than a pretty woman, for it is remarkable—at least in France, and I think in Italy—* how much better looking the peasant men are, than the women of the same class. Perhaps a moral feeling may mingle with our view of the subject, though we may not be aware of it. A soldier or a labourer does not appear to us less seemly for being somewhat weather-beaten,—indeed it may even become him, as paleness does a nun, or scars a warrior: but a weather-beaten, overworked woman, with the severities of toil and season in her face, seems a being wronged by fate,

* I will not say England, not being sure of my ground there; besides, our country girls bonnet out the sun, and except the pretty trade of hay-making, know little of field labour.

and forced into unnatural circumstances. Exuberant freshness is frequently the chief beauty of a peasant girl: this freshness lost, as it speedily is, the girl grows plain if she be not really and legitimately handsome, and we miss the womanlike charm which mental refinement gives to the countenance and movements; while the youth redeems his homeliness by a manly bearing, befitting his state and habitual occupations.

Perhaps, after all, this idea may be a fanciful one: our own reasons always appears to us reasonable, and arguments which might probably be unhorsed by a 'fudge,' seem to our parent hearts screwed to the very sticking point.

We should not believe ourselves in the Pyrenees, if we did not occasionally discuss a bear hunt. But a bear hunt now, is not what I supposed it to be, or what it probably is in winter time,—a general gathering, a call of hunters starting up from fen and fern, scouring the forests, running along the edges of the glaciers, and making the ice ring as their hardy footsteps pass over its crackling surface; but rather a solitary pleasure, sometimes pursued by a single hunter, at others shared by

two or three companions in enterprise. There is a hunter here of high renown,* who, a few days ago, shot a magnificent animal as it came looking for its fate down a gulley in the mountains, and courteously threw itself in the way of the enemy,—very polite in old Bruin, who was perhaps crossed in love, or disappointed in politics. This mountain Esau is deeply versed in all the mysteries of his craft, and kills, skins, extracts the grease, and turns every inch of his victim to account in a masterly style. An old hunter, whose memory is revered in the mountains, bequeathed to him all his secrets,—a better legacy for a hardy peasant than the philosopher's stone, with its entail of dangers and anxieties.

It was in the mountains of Béarn (neighbours to Bigorre) that Henri Quatre hunted wolves; and I still see him doffing his bonnet reverently, and making the sign of the cross, before he departed for the chase. Such (it is said) was his custom; and if so, one probably adopted by an imagination pleased with this believing and affectionate expres-

* Since killed by the falling of a rock, while in pursuit of an izard.

sion of a sentiment independent of, and unchanged by, forms. There too the famous Gaston Comte de Foix, likened to Phœbus for his beauty, hunted his way to paradise,* making the old mountains echo to the sound of his horn; for in those days nobles cultivated (as we are told) the art of blowing on this forest instrument, which belongs to the woods as a piano does to the drawing-room; and Gaston himself, in his quality of poet, lauds the performance of the great hunter Huet de Nantes, and of his bold compeer the lord of Montmorenci.

This splendid Gaston Phœbus, who anticipated in his small dominions the state of Louis XIV., who loved the song of the menestriers, and the chansons, rondeaux, and virelets of his *clercs*, whose *cheualiers* and *escuyers* filled the halls of the palace of Orthez with talk of love and war, who was "doux et amoureux" to all "dames and demoiselles," the handsomest man of the time, (as Froissart tells us), skilled and bold in war, and

* He wrote a poem (I think it was) to prove that a hunter's life, being an occupied and healthful one, nourished virtuous sentiments, and so led to paradise.

accomplished in the arts of peace, was not in all things above the level of his age; an age in which the noblest sentiments, the most chivalrous actions, were often warped or stained by injustice and cruelty. Witness the murder of the high-minded Pierre Ernaut,* and the death of that poor youth his own son, caused, if not actually perpetrated, by himself. It was this same Phœbus who, when the Black Prince required homage of him for the country of Béarn, replied bravely, "Le pays de Béarn est si frāche terre, qu'il n'en doit hommage à nul seigneur du monde."

But of wolves we, in this season, hear nothing, and even of bears but little; the izard is the common game. It is the same animal (so say the sportsmen) as the chamois of the Alps, but here of a smaller growth. We called on one yesterday, a pet nursed in a hunter's cottage; it was not at home, but three huge heath-cocks, scientifically stuffed, were. There was a glass-case, too, full of dead game; among which the white partridge,—that pretty bird that loses its brown colour when the snow comes, as if nature would assist it to

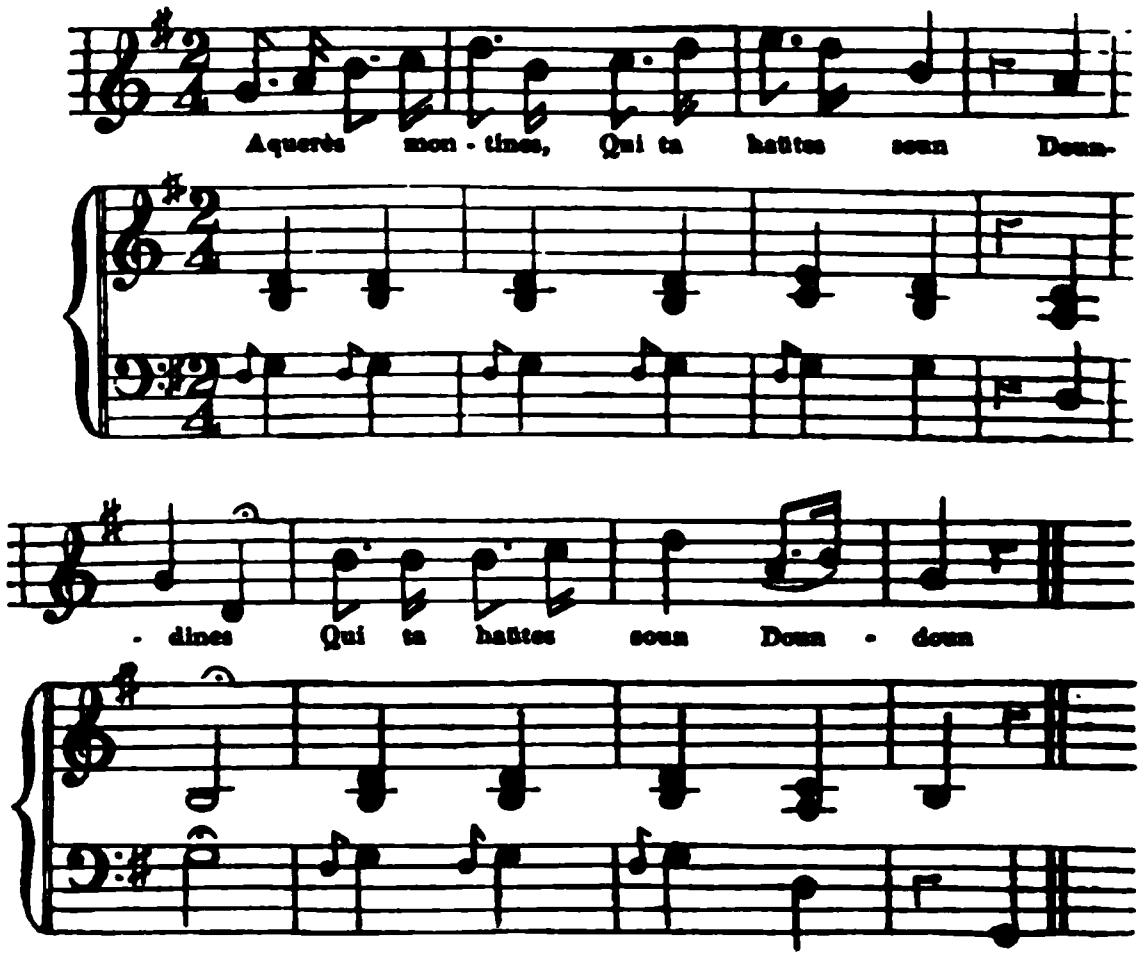
* See page 257.

elude the sportsman by blending its hue with the universal one of the earth,—made a very graceful appearance, and helped, with the aid of a row of sage and treacherous-looking owls, to pass off the disappointment.

In the human countenance, the indications of wisdom are usually thoughtfulness, elevation, and serenity; but in the physiognomy of the owl, the contradictory expressions of wisdom and wickedness are curiously combined. Nothing so designing as the grave stare, or lazy wink of an owl; and yet there is great reflection, experience, insight, an almost human concentration of thought, and even (or I fancy it) power of deduction, in his countenance. If an owl could be compelled, by spell or incantation, to give his advice sincerely, it would be, I am convinced, inestimable; but I would not give a straw for his friendship.

I have talked a great deal about Gaston Phœbus as the handsomest man of his age; a most valorous captain, a magnificent prince, a hunter, a poet, and—as the best and bravest sometimes were in that rough period—a cruel enemy. A ballad, of which both the words and the music

are ascribed to him, and whose simple and antique melody was no doubt often breathed from lady's lip in the costly chambers of Orthez, is still sung in the cabins of Béarn. There is something tender and dolesome in the air, which suits not only the meaning of the words, but their mere sound; it has a mountain character, original and belonging to the past, the long ago. I should have taken it for the song of the shepherd, not of a prince: its deep, dull, well-a-day burden is to me full of expression, and of the softest kind.



The translation is a literal one, with which a friend has obliged me.

Aquerès mountines	Ces montagnes
Qui ta haütes soun,	Qui si hautes sont,
Doundines,	Doundines,
Qui ta haütes soun,	Qui si hautes sont,
Doundoun.	Doundoun.
M'empechen de bede	M'empechent de voir
Mas amous oun soun,	Mes amours où sont,
Doundinè,	Doundine,
Mas amous oun soun,	Mes amours où sont,
Doundoun.	Doundoun.
Si sabi las bede	Si je savois les voir
Ou las rencountra,	Ou les rencontrer,
Doundinè,	Doundine,
Ou las rencountra,	Ou les rencontrer,
Dounda.	Dounda.
Passen laygietta	Je passerai l'eau
Chens poü dem nega,	Sans peur de me noyer,
Doundinè,	Doundine,
Chens poü dem nega,	Sans peur de me noyer,
Dounda.	Dounda.

How much does the beauty of a word depend on its associations! Father, mother, are thick words, that would have small charm in their naked sound; yet what reverence, tenderness, and

beauty, do we find in them! Child, too, might be harsh, but for the thought that softens it into something sweet and sacred. At this moment, an infant in the street calls to its mother with such a fond, long-drawn, and protection-claiming *ma-man*, that a volume on the subject of mother love and infant reliance could not say more.

A-propos to words. Shakspeare has melted down old words and recoined them with new images, effacing their original inscriptions when it pleases him to stamp them with another; and that, perhaps, of a meaning altogether opposite to the original one. The word *flutter* belongs to a fan, or to any other light thing easily agitated,—a girl's heart, a bird's wing: "when he asked me to dance, I was all in a flutter,"—"little bird with fluttering wing,"—"Narcissa fluttered her fan," &c. But when Caius Marcius *flutters* the Volscians in Corioli, the sense of the word seems changed, and it becomes associated, against its nature, with images of exceeding vigour and boldness.

The French have many words of happy, but untranslateable significance, which we beg leave to borrow from them; and we have some which are

unborrowable. *Rejoice*, is one: what a word that is! "Rejoice, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" Does it not go down to the very depths of the heart? and do not all its sleeping echoes wake up and answer joyfully? I said so once to a very clever and poetical-minded man,—a Frenchman, but who knew English; but he did not feel its glory, it did not come to him with the bright and kindling sound with which it rings on the familiar ear; to him it was a mere word, with no other meaning than its literal one. I tried to force it down, but it would not do,—word and spirit were both utterly unexplainable. How unjust we are often to translators, and with what unappreciating nonchalance we say—"he only translated it;" Coleridge only translated Wallenstein!

CHAPTER XVI.

CAUTERETZ, CONTINUED — SPANIARDS — THEIR STAGE EFFECT—CAUTERETZ — ITS SHOW POINTS AND REAL BEAUTIES—THE MONNE—GRANGE DE LA REINE—EVENING IN THE MOUNTAINS—PARISIAN TROUBADOURS—THE MULETERR AND THE MOUNTAIN SHEPHERD—TRAVELLED MEN—VANITY VERY LIKE PHILOSOPHY.

We are continually put in mind here of our vicinity to Spain, by the sight of the Spanish peasants who stand about idly in our *Place*, with their dry little wives, as shrivelled as winter apples, knitting beside them. Their dress consists of a coloured handkerchief tied round the head, with the large Arragonian hat, slightly turned up all round, thrown over it in a careless way that might become better visages; a scarlet sash binding the waist, a vest without sleeves, and stockings without feet, kept tight by a strap that passes under the sole of the sandal. This last article (called *spartille*) is made of hempen cord flattened; it just takes in the top of the toe, and forming a very

low socket for the heel, leaves the rest of the foot, to which it is attached by strings tied over the instep, entirely bare. This is the fair-weather equipment; but should the day be cold, they lay a sort of plaided blanket across the chest; and letting the ends fall over the shoulders and hang down behind, contrive to give to this simple drapery considerable stage effect.

Notwithstanding their dirt and ugliness, these men have something very remarkable about them: their non-conformance with the fashion of trousers, the knee garter, tight stocking, spartille bound and fastened with light blue tape, broad hat, and draped blanket, give them, at a favourable distance, a complete identity with the Don Cæsars and Don Pedros of the old comedies. Their bearing is usually grand and disengaged, their movements free, and even vaunting. At this moment, a man treads and re-treads a space of a dozen paces opposite to my window, who looks as if he called Gonsalvo de Cordova his ancestor; his bold step, sometimes springy, sometimes lounging, has nothing of the peasant trot in it; and though rags and patches, tangled locks and unwashed face, may,

when this dramatic-figure is approached, disenchant the imagination, yet, details effaced, the effect is admirable.

Cauteretz has beauty about it, and romance, and wildness; it has grandeur too, but not perhaps of that high-toned and powerful character which might qualify it for especial eminence in a country so proudly featured as the Pyrenees. But I speak only of the scenery immediately surrounding the village, which may be called cheerfully majestic, and commands from its heights, and even middle points, some charming views. Of these, the most remarkable is from the summit of the Monné, which is usually ascended at night to catch the first burst of the sun, when the coup d'œil is said to be magnificent. The next show point is the Grange de la Reine, a much lower station, and at the opposite side of the valley. The ascent, through woods of low beech and up the steep sides of meadows, whose velvet green disqualifies both pen and pencil, is sometimes uncomfortably abrupt, but always beautiful. The last pinch is what passers-by might perhaps call perpendicular, and moreover is carpeted with slippery turf, without

any path or mark of previous footstep; yet my chairmen preferred it to a track lower down, which seemed to me rail-road work in comparison: so up they went *cabrant* on the sides of their feet, (there being no hold for the sole,) with an agility and steadiness not to be believed on hear-say; and festooning their way with the providential security of a drunken man, who reels to the very edge of a precipice, but rarely over it.

The Grange de la Reine takes its name from a visit paid to it by the ex-queen of Holland, (Hortense,) who paused long upon its beauty; so did we, long and delightedly. Before us rose the lofty Monné and its tall compeers, with the dark gorge of Cauteretz lengthening to the right, and the open valley of Argelez appearing in a light as soft as day-break beyond it; while to the left the bold Pic de Peygara showed off proudly in an advantageous twilight. Looking against it as darkness falls, its fine pyramidal form seems to detach itself more firmly, its base to spread, its woods to blacken and grow more massive; while the green enclosures beneath, fed by streams and dotted with peaceful habitations, the quiet grange, the mel-

low thatch, seen dimly through the low trees, still keep some colouring of light on their brighter surface.

I know of nothing so beautiful as the shut of evening in the mountain gorges, when the deepening twilight falls like the shadow of an angel's wing upon the landscape, and the light of day still lies, as if upon another world, on the distant opening, as hope does on the threshold of the heart, though darkness may be in its inner chambers. But when is the hour in which the lights of heaven are not beautiful? Even the dreary or the angry ones have beauty in them to the eye that seeks it,—a sullen beauty, perhaps a fearful one; but how lifted above all common-place impressions are those which the soul receives from its contemplation.

I think I should dearly love to be transported now and then on a warm cloud to the top of some high mountain at the setting of the sun, or under the pale circle of the moon, to see the golden eye close, and hear the chimes of heaven; or at the early day-break, when the young light seems to lift up the darkness that hangs heavily upon it; but as it is, I am bound to the valleys, and there are

many sweet bits and corners here that reconcile one to an humbler level, such as the bank on which we now repose listening to the rough waters, woods running upwards from the eye, ledges projecting towards it, and the mountain rents making wild vistas that, as the day lightens or the evening falls upon them, assume various and mystical aspects; shadowing out a land that one might imagine traversed by other hunters than the brown berrêts who clamber up after the bears: though the last, perhaps, become it best, and are more native to the rude mountains than the plumed spectres of the gallant knights,—Counts of Bigorre and chieftains of Béarn, who still fight and hunt in song and story over the dark Pyrenees. Yet only in song and story, for their material presence has vanished with the châteaux and the chatelains, to make way for the *métairie* and the red capulet.

But besides its poetry, there is a general air of cheerfulness in this quiet spot, and a character of repose in this same cheerfulness, that has something very homely and heart-warming in it,—at least to my fancy. For those whose fancies are, and ought to be, less sobered down than mine

there are enjoyments of another kind, not only one, but two *Cercles;* and gay people go to both, to play at cards, and stimulate a waltz, if possible; but hitherto with little success. Sometimes a solitary couple start off, but if unfollowed, soon sit down again, as if ashamed of having set a useless example; but the season is yet in its infancy, and the shoals, which we hear with regret are expected from Paris, are not yet even on the road. The present visitors are chiefly families from Toulouse, Bordeaux, and other nearer towns: among those from the last-named place, is a young lady, a dilletante nightingale of marvellous song, who when the society of the *Cercle* is strictly limited to her own intimate acquaintance, does sometimes

> - - - - "take the soul,
> And lap it in elysium."

There is no attempt at a theatre, as yet no gallant cavalcades. Paris to the rowel of the spur, or the cut of the *amazone*——Of those, perhaps, hereafter; but sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

Once upon a time, a troop of sentimentalists from the capital, who wished to astonish the wood gods and make a sensation among their goat-footed divinities, arrayed themselves like opera

troubadours, and bent their steps towards the Lac de Gaube. The fauns, startled at the approach of such unusual visitors, and nettled at the intrusion, petitioned Pan; who, applying his syrinx to his lips, blew through it so lustily, that he soon piped in the stray clouds that had gone pleasuring over the hills; and, having himself some other sport in view, handed over the mountebank minstrels to their correction,—praying them, as a mark of friendship to an ancient neighbour, who had never condescended to marble floors, or slept under other canopy than a skyey one, to rid his haunts of such fantastic visitors. The clouds consented; and suddenly opening their sluices, down came the rain, soaking the light vest of taffeta and the elastic slipper through and through; and the professors of the *gaie science*, who, with their *dames de haute parage* and *joyeuses damoyselles*, had left Cauteretz with flying colours, in the innocent intention of chaunting *sirventes*, or dialogue-ing *tensons*, for the merrie people of the woods, sneaked back again like half-drowned rats, cured probably of the desire to seek notoriety in the forests.

I have just been told of Spaniards who walk abroad here at night dressed, like Figaro, in vests

of silk, with tasselled nets and silver-tagged knee strings; handsome, too, as "the black-eyed boy," who, his long chapter of vicissitudes over, consumes the fag-end of his life in the Avenue de Neuilly. But I presume them to be masqueraders; for certainly the squalid specimens (already mentioned) who submit their pretensions to day-light scrutiny, are, however effective their far off air may be, as unlike the supple, silken, and mercurial Figaro, as the humble priest who passes at this moment is to Schiller's Grand Inquisitor.

But these scrubby folks are the poor shepherds of the mountains; who, however poetically their name and calling may sound when set to Lydian measure, are in most countries a weather-beaten, broken-down race, afflicted with the chronic maladies which the sudden changes and extremes of season heap upon those who are exposed to their baneful influences. It is in the fertile plains or fat valleys that one must look for the sleek and robust figures, models of suppleness and vigour, whom we hear and read of. The Spanish muleteers are said to be a fine race. I saw a sample at Pau, with a fringed instep and a slashed knee, and so hung about with aigulets and other gaude-

ries, that at a distance I thought he jingled, and could have almost fancied that he had as many bells upon him as his mule. But theirs is a joyous, careless, varying life, and as they are always smugglers as well as muleteers, has something in it of excitement and adventure that keeps the spirits alive, and works healthfully on the body through the medium of the mind. The accidents of such a life, and its enjoyments, entirely unclouded by any qualm of conscience,—for it is the custom-house officer, not the smuggler, who is here considered as the robber,—endear it to those who adventure in its course. If they are pinched to-day, their sacks and wine-skins may be replenished to-morrow; if the morning rain wets them through, they can generally reckon on good drying ground at night: often journeying in bands, always in movement, their versatile life forms a striking contrast to the melancholy monotony of a pastoral existence. After a hazardous or toilsome course, the luxury of rest, of welcome,—perhaps of home, awaits them. Or if their hearth be distant, the warm greetings of a familiar host, the snug shelter of an habitual corner where their

coming is looked for, their return expected; a bench by the bright fire of the humble inn, a seat by the smoking olio, kept for the well-known customer whose periodical visits seldom fail, almost supply its place.

But the poor shepherd—the real one—has no such comfortable compensations: wrapped in his cloak of sheep-skin, he watches his flock on the high mountains; and, cut off for many months from all communication with home or friend, paces away his hours on the solitary heath, employed perhaps in knitting the coarse stockings meant to constitute his winter provision. His days are passed in the solitude of the wild, his nights in the solitude of his hut; he eats his cake of maize, and swallows his draught of milk in silence, and lies down to rest without a living soul near him to whom he can say "God bless you!" Even the sabbath-bell, that tolls in all within its sound to the general act of pious acknowledgment, has no voice in the desert; and the prayer which we are taught to hope will be accepted when two or three are gathered together in the name of God, must be pronounced alone.

The travelling-made-easy of the present day, has been a greater leveller than the spelling-book: the conscription made travellers even of the most home-bred rustics. A peasant was formerly a man, like Moab, who had "settled on his lees, and had not been emptied from vessel to vessel; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent was not changed:" but of late years this simple singleness of mind has been in most places disturbed, and in many overturned by the influence of circumstances. My chairmen, and all my particular friends amongst the goatherds, &c.—those over forty, at least—talk, some of Leipzig, others of Moscow, others again of Cairo, as if they were Auch or Agen; which towns, or nearer ones, would have themselves been formerly called foreign parts. Half of these men have been

- - - - "to Walachie,
To Prussia and to Tartarie,
To Alexandrie and Turkie,"

and though oftenest simple of speech, yet they sometimes show off a little of the conceitedness of travelled folks. This evening, a beautiful one, as I sat on a dry stone Lalla Rookh-ing it, with my

sure-footed bearers stretched on the turf near me telling stories, (tales of the bivouac, all tobacco and brandy; not a thought in them of maize or millet, or the goat's milk of the mountains,) one, a greater parleyer than the rest, and who, according to his own account, had fought under all skies, regretted his "*education manquée.*"—"With my talents (he added) and advantages, if I had learned to read and write, I should have done great things." I thought *mes talents* was pronounced with an emphasis of satisfaction that outweighed the regret; perhaps he was not displeased to have an excuse for not being (though forty-eight) either prince or minister; it was said, with an air of conviction, that he might probably have been one or the other but for the omission of the Dilworth, or whatever may be equivalent to it hereabouts. For screwing up the spirits to the true concert pitch, there are few things like vanity; I do not mean that morbid and craving vanity which engenders envy and all other evil things, but the good-humoured vanity that can not be affronted, and by the bare help of which I have seen people make themselves perfectly happy, without possessing a single one of those ingredients

—facility excepted—which are usually considered as essential to happiness.

But though the hope of advancement, on literary grounds, had gone out of my chairman's heart in as far as he was himself concerned, yet it was only to settle itself a little farther off; and I respected him for the sentiment, and the hearty honest warmth with which it was expressed. His children (he said) should have the helps that he had wanted; he had a *demoiselle** of ten years old, who wrote like a clerk; and "a tender juvenal, a most acute juvenal" of eight, who would be fit some time or another to fill the place of "Mister muster-master general," or any thing else, clerical or laical, that might fall in his way. The past he knew was irremediable; but throwing his own personality into that of his children, he rubbed his hands and started for the future with a vigour that will die game, and might give many a lesson in its onward journey.

* The higher classes of French always say, *ma fille, ma femme*; which familiar appellations the humbler ones convert into *demoiselle* and *épouse*, as being loftier perhaps.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAUTERETZ, CONTINUED — HAWKERS, LITERARY AND OTHERWISE — BOOKS OF THE DAY--ABUSE OF TALENT —THE SEASON OPENED—THE EASY TOILETTE—CLIMATE—MUSIC AND ITS ILLUSIONS—THE VIOLIN—ALL THAT MAY BE DONE WITH IT—THE POETRY OF NAMES — COMPENSATIONS — SUPERSTITION — ITS COMFORTS AND ITS DANGERS—LONG LIVE THE FAIRIES.

This morning, as I sat reverie-ing in my corner, with a book which I dearly love open before me, in walked a hawker from Barèges; and before I was aware of her presence, had opened a bale as large as the lord chancellor's woolsack, and was already in the act of arranging her shawls on the backs of the chairs, with the borders skilfully put together so as to look brighter and broader than they really were. There are but few shops here, and those few meanly and meagrely furnished, but a perpetual traffic is carried on by pedlars from Barèges, Bayonne, Toulouse, &c., who hawk their wares

from house to house; and as the entrance door is never closed, walk up stairs, and let themselves in without ceremony.

Yesterday, a pedlar paraded his pack with a Corneille, a Molière, a Pascal, and a Montesquieu in it, but found no sale. The established classics of French literature are like old stock-plays—still on the list, though cobwebbed for want of handling; for who will read the one or *assist* at the other, when the annals of the guillotine, or of the crimes that lead to it, are published every day and acted every night for their edification;—all wreathed, too, and decorated, like the veiled skeleton at the Egyptian feast, with flowers whose very brightness has death in it. To offer such homely food to minds accustomed to violent excitement, would be like setting a household loaf—suppose it even of the best wheaten flour—before one who had been living on cayenne broils and mulagatawnee, and expect that he would feast upon it.

For myself, I must say, that my palate being but indifferently paved, I never could reconcile it to such stimulating food; nor do I ever stumble on one of those records of misused powers without

feeling something deeper even than regret. If, in a reading country the great spring by which the passions are excited the judgment influenced, the character strengthened or perverted, and that bias given to the mind which decides its future action, be the press,—and who can doubt it?—what a national calamity must such a literature as its present one be to France!—a literature that revels in the anatomy of vice, and whose inspiration is a Bacchante that rushes on with blood-shot eyes and hideous songs, in which vice-inciting words are set to deadly music; a literature which makes the necessity of emotion (*le besoin d'être ému*) a paramount and habitual feeling, and indisposes the mind for the reception of any impressions but those which, neglecting its higher faculties, its interior powers, address themselves to its weaknesses through the medium of the senses.

But the bane will no doubt produce the antidote; and this livid literature, the offspring of hardihood and a demoralized imagination rather than of genius, but in which there is usually enough of the latter to make us lament its perversion, and sometimes a melancholy exuberance

whose very splendour shocks, will, in all likelihood and before long, die a natural death. Whenever morals are grossly outraged, there is, sooner or later, but infallibly, a re-action, general, severe, and decisive; for the moral feeling, however it may be drugged into temporary apathy, is never extinct in a great population; and works that have no other end but that of creating artificial excitement, which neither stand upon the base of usefulness or of moral beauty, which treat religion as a political invention and virtue as an expedient, beating down all holy feelings, all consoling hopes, all beautiful reliances, by the broad diction of vice, cannot long retain their influence. Their very excitement must in the end produce the languor of satiety, as their uniform colouring and tendence must at length efface the character of individuality.

The host of successful imitators germinated by the popularity of certain great writers in this way, proves how much more easy it is to duplicate exaggeration, than to approach the simplicity of nature. There are few writers who have dabbled in the present style of representative ro-

mance, who cannot work up a horror or dramatize a crime, if not with the power of their masters, at least currently. Factitious feeling, like the nose of a mask, offers its tempting protuberance to all who are inclined to seize it; and depravity put into action, presents immense facilities to those who are not ashamed to speculate on the evil propensities of man; who, appealing to his worst feelings and worst passions, dare to open the scent of vice, and setting vacillating minds upon it, have the callous courage to rejoice at seeing them intoxicated by its vapour. But that men of genius should abuse the great trust by whose investiture they have been made mighty above their fellows, and forget the awful responsibility which their high prerogative imposes, is more than melancholy. So is the whole system, the motives, the results, the works themselves; which, impious, gloomy, and offensive as they may be, unjust to human nature and discouraging to virtue, are less repelling even in their hard deformity, than in the ghastly levity, the atrocious libertinism mixed up with it.

July 28th. Within a few days we have made a flying leap from tranquillity to bustle. Arrivals

are frequent, so of course are new faces; balls warm into vigour, beauties are announced, and the sweet stillness, the country quiet of this pretty little place, is threatened, or more than threatened, with invasion. Already the two *Cercles* are at daggers drawn, and every spring set in motion by each of the rival proprietors to propel the crowd in the direction of his own particular interest. One *Cercle* being quite enough for the place, the crowd cry out with Macheath, "How happy could I be with either;" but less *nonchalant* than that renowned commander, instead of finishing with a 'tol de rol,' go to both.

One of the principal charms of these cheerful and unceremonious coteries, is the easy toilette; perhaps the early hours may be another. There is great good sense in not exhausting an amusement; chaperons keep their eyes open, and young ladies keep their roses,—so soon lost in the vapour-bath atmosphere of a jammed ball-room, where the indefatigables, who regularly wait for the dregs of an entertainment, look, at the end of the season, as if they had cheated Charon of his fare, or were indulging in a game of snap-dragon.

Strangers who come here unknown, and wish to make acquaintances, are authorized by the received code of politeness to send their cards to those who have arrived before them; which form, usually gone through, sanctions a bow, and if the parties are so disposed, opens the way to a future acquaintance. Reserved persons who do not understand this custom, are shy of complying with it, lest it should involve them in any disagreeable consequences; though none whatever are to be apprehended, as no acquaintance follows unless it be mutually desired: but people have a kind of knowledge of each other, which is thought to give a family air to the evening meetings very favourable to cheerfulness.

I have spoken of the easy toilette, but without meaning to insinuate that the modest cloak of pepper and salt, drugget, and subdued black dress of the English ramblers in Switzerland, is ever encountered here. The wanderers in that "hempen, homespun country," I mean as far as fashions are concerned, are usually birds of passage on the wing for another land, and who, having Italy in perspective, do not unpack; but preserving their

Paris *modes* inviolate for the coteries of Rome or Naples, equip themselves sturdily for mountain work, and think of nothing more, when the first dinner bell-rings, than ablutions, smooth hair, and a little fresh frilling. But here people come prepared for something of society, though on a limited scale; and as the Pyrenees are the aim and end of their journey, and lead to nothing, the imperials are unpacked, and their elegant, though in general very simple contents (for in France the dress is always in keeping with the place) spread abroad, to the dismay of those who reckoned on running out in the dear little apron.

Besides, the visitors here are almost entirely French, who, like some abigail of romance that I have read of,—it may be the renowned Mrs. Honour herself, though I will not vouch for it,—never travel without their sweet clothes; while in Switzerland they are principally English, hard-working labourers, some with the love of nature in their hearts and the deep feeling of its most marvellous beauty; others with a spirit of enterprise that is, in its way, enthusiasm; all fearless of chances, and prepared for rough marches in the

fitful weather incident to a Swiss climate. Here we have fair-weather skies and fashions,—fashions calculated on the reputation of the skies, and skies meriting all the fine things that can be said of them. It is true, that the example of a single summer cannot be fairly taken as a criterion of climate, any more than a pretty face as a voucher for the charms of its neighbour; both may be fallible tests, and yet we are apt to put our faith in such credentials. I remember once remarking the beauty of a girl who kept a stall close to the gate of a town, and happened to be the first person that we saw on entering it. "She is nothing, (said a person to whom I pointed her out,) you will see hundreds here that are handsomer." I thought myself among the houries, but never saw another pretty face while I remained in their paradise.

Perhaps this is not a case in point, and that the present delicious weather, instead of being like my girl at the gate, a false sample, may be the usual settled fine of the Pyreneean mountains, (for the plains have another climate and a more ardent one); if so, it is perfect: sun, air, and sky, even in their kindest moments, cannot do better.

As we loitered along this evening, returning slowly from our twilight ramble, our troubadours of the inn were making eloquent music for the good pleasure of a listening maiden, who looked down upon them from her balcony. It was a charming air—the one they played, with a sweet touch of sorrow in it, and beautifully did they bring it out from their stringed instruments, with skill enough to give effect to feeling, and feeling sufficient to keep skill, at least its mechanism, out of mind. If they had been hidden in a wood, and I the only living listener, I might have fancied their music the symphonies of angels, growing into sweeter strength as the entire silence of night fell upon them. But the robust mistress of the band, her long-haired child, (of canister memory,) and two male companions, literally and physically street fiddlers, with the unshorn Hebrew look which especially belongs to that fraternity, were full in view,—so no room for illusions.

These performers are from the old minstrel land, and to their violins Cauteretz owes all its music: I have never heard other sound either of voice or instrument. The old painters loved to place a violin in the hands of their angels, and

though the engine may be of quaint form, and unfitted by familiar associations to figure in a celestial choir, whose organ of praise should be (it would seem) the ready one of seraphic song, yet, as it was in the taste of the age to express the worship of angels by the intervention of human ingenuity, a better choice could not have been made than of this instrument; for there is none through whose sound—fluent and voice-like—the song of praise, or the deep ravishment of absorbed and tremulous adoration, could have found a freer, purer, or more congenial medium, except it were in the glorious burst, the upswelling hallelujah, or the prolonged vibrations of the organ.

I greatly love the violin, that is in skilful hands, and have often, as the cunning bow stole upwards, drawing out a fine continuous tone till it reached the highest clef of sound, fancied that its silvery wailing might be like the voice of a fallen, but contrite spirit. If it were necessary to justify my taste in instruments, which it is not, so many are of the same fancy, I might be tempted to say pithy and convincing things to those who confound the fiddle with the violin; or to those who, having only heard the scrape of the former, or danced to

it, know little of what the *violin* is capable of producing, or of the high discourse which the instrument of home fun or ball-room gaiety can hold with our thoughts, feelings, passions, when skilfully awakened. The violin player and the fiddler profess the same art, and exercise it with the same (mechanical) implements; so do Wordsworth and the illustrious rhymer who turns out limping couplets, and "serves the quality" with elegies or epithalamiums, and the rustic lover with doggrel, at all prices, from "whatever your honour pleases," down to the humbler pennyworth.

The eldest sons of the earth, as some one calls the great mountains, become the expressive appellations which distinguish them here,—as La Maladetta, (the accursed mountain); the Poey Mourou, (black peak); Mont Perdu, (lost mountain); Traou Malet,* (mauvais trou); Campana del Val, (bell of the valley, and the same that will toll on the day of judgment), &c. The lakes and torrents, too, have had their romantic baptisms,—as the Coumbe Scure, (lake of the dark hill); Riou Mou, (bad stream); le Pas de l'Ours, (the pass of the bear), and many others; some chris-

* Tourmalet.

tened in the patois of the country, others familiarized to the stranger's ear through the less energetic medium of the modern tongue. The poetical feeling to which the streams and mountains of the Pyrenees owe their characteristic denominations, appears to be the heritage of rude minds. We often find fine or modern names grafted on the simple and expressive ones by which the remarkable features of a country are known in the dialect of the peasants, but they have not their charm or character. The literal meaning, too, of these vernacular names is sometimes so beautiful! What sweet ones are often attached to old lands in Ireland,—as Lisnegar, the fort of sorrow; or Benena, the music of the glen: what a sin it would be to make Rose Hill, or Holly Mount, of them, or even Tivoli, or Laurentinum. I do not know what Cader Idris may mean, nor yet Helvelleyn; but if they be translateable it must, I am sure, be into something wild and grand; both sound so in their untranslated tongue.

Nothing so comfortable as a belief in compensations. I have just now been talking to a woman, who told me wonders of Toulouse, where she had lived formerly; Cauteretz was of course a dull

spot compared with it, but then you were not tempted to put into the lottery: this was the equivalent. The compensation sometimes lies, like truth, at the bottom of the well, and it is not every one who can draw it up; sometimes *cela saute aux yeux*, as the French say. I will not name names, but once upon a time there was a certain man whose father died at the age of *eighty*; the son, a philosopher and scholar, received with dignity the consolations of his friends, and thanking them graciously, added, "C'est un grand malheur, une grande perte; mais, enfin, mon père étoit octogone."* This may be called an eight-sided compensation.

The mountaineers of the Pyrenees are, like all other dwellers in remote places, addicted to superstition, and believers (they say) in all those old credences at which the more instructed laugh. Wise men, I know, consider superstition as a stupid thing, at once the root and flower of ignorance; but I, who am not wise, cannot help thinking that it is sometimes a garment to the poor, a sort of Providence that hangs berries on the dry bushes that tangle in their path, covering their briery

* *i. e.* Octogénaire.

scantiness with a little show of colouring. Besides, it is a belief, and that is in itself a blessing; those who acknowledge supernatural agency, will also acknowledge a directing power.

Black superstition I should, however, bar out; though I well know the delight,—vague, fearful, dark, but still delight,—which this excitement produces; and how the dullest mind answers to the touch, as the sleepy horse does to the stroke of the whip; at once finding unknown or forgotten energies, and revelling in their exercise. But shutting the door against these sable gentlemen, I would leave the key-hole open for the fairies, (greatly respected here,) and for other superstitions of a pious and gentle nature, which I often think are the grains of salt that give pungency to a brown-bread existence. Some, too, are so beautiful! all those that belong to the Virgin have such a blush of freshness on them, something so household and congenial to the innocent heart, that it would be a pity to rob the glens and mountains of the shrines which perpetuate so sweet a worship. The voices which are heard praying in the desert, the angels that in the guise of benighted wanderers knock at the herdsman's hut,

and, if they find him of good faith, bestow their blessing on him; the holy well in the wilderness, the shrine in the hollow of the rock, are dreams that I would leave with the devout souls who find comfort in them; neither would I disturb their faith in the rude effigies of that sacred symbol, which all Christian eyes behold with reverence.

But on superstition that takes its colouring from the spreading circle of monastic gloom, whose base is terror, and object mental degradation or enthralment, I would have no mercy. It has nothing in common with the tender and consoling superstitions of the mountains, with the legends of the shepherd's hut, or the evening visions of the desert, except the demand which it makes on the necessary stock of credulity.

My view of the subject is not, perhaps, a very philosophical one. I should probably make a bad reformer; for, with a sincere desire to see the light of truth breaking in upon the gloom of ignorance and bigotry, to see religion entering into the heart instead of merely exciting the fancy, based on the pure and beautiful foundation of the gospel instead of on the inventions of man, and looking up to heaven with humble confidence instead of

making over its dearest interests to foreign agency; yet for the gentle superstitions already spoken of, I feel a tenderness of which I cannot divest myself. I would disarm the nursery faith of its terrors, but keep its poetry, its cheering dreams, and consoling presages; I would keep, too, its fairy tales, for I doat on them; and for their dear and honoured sakes who are therein shrined, would reform with a pair of scissors, not a scythe; and when condemned for mal-administration, go out of the world crying "Long live Poucet and his seven brothers! long live the desert fairy, the yellow dwarf, and the renowned Ricquet à la Houpe!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

EXCURSION TO THE CHATEAU DESPOURRINS—THE MASON'S EYE AND THE POET'S—THE MOUNTAIN MINSTREL—CLOTILDE—THE PARADISE OF ST. SAVIN—THE ABBEY CHURCH—QUEEN MARGARET'S VISIT—MONKS AND MAIDS OF HONOUR—MONASTIC IDLENESS—THE SAINT—FLIES AND FLOWERS—THE HOLY MAN—RETURN TO CAUTERETZ—WANTS—BEAUTY—A WATERING-PLACE CONSCIENCE.

THE sweet sun and soft shadows of yesterday, tempted us to make an excursion to the abbey of St. Savin, in the bright valley of Argelez. There is but one carriage-road from Cauteretz, the same gorge of which I have already spoken; and beautiful it looked to-day, especially where the hills recede, as if to let the eye fall at once on the clear and rapid river, the sunlit valley beyond, the peaked mountains, and the village of Pierrefitte looking white and cool in the midst of its dark trees and green savannahs. It is a sparkling picture full of living freshness, and succeeds to the more scowling scenery of the gorge as Lady ——'s

smile does to the lour of her eye-brows, all the more effective for the contrast.

Having passed Pierrefitte, we left the carriage and the high road, and while the more effective members of the family party took to their feet, I inserted myself in a chair, and humbly imitating the rajah's wives, set off with my bearers. We dispensed with elephants and Lalla Rookh curtains, but not altogether with pretensions; for the men, sensible perhaps that matters looked somewhat rickety, swelled out about a new chair to be set up next season, in all the elegance of which hoops and tarpaulin are susceptible In the mean time, on we went (steadying the rickets as well as we could) along shaded paths and fresh meadows, till we arrived at a dismantled house of an agreeable elevation, raised on a charming terrace, but with scarcely a whole pane of glass in the windows; hay, straw, boards, all put in requisition, and clubbing their capabilities to keep out the weather. In short, a genuine Castle Rackrent, with an old Thady and a young one, two half-starved cats and a turbulent mastiff, who would have eaten us all up, I believe, but for an intimate friend of his, who bullied him into tranquillity.

This is the Château Despourrins, (or Miramont, as it is also called,) and a charming thing it might be made, if its proprietor were able or willing (for either will or power seems wanting) to rescue it from the state of dilapidation into which it seems fast falling. The terrace, or rather the view from it, is delightful; and no one being at home but the Thadys and the cats, we begged leave to dine upon it, with the beautiful valley of Argelez unrolled before us, the road within buzzing distance, the mountains farther off; beneath, a hamlet with its church and rustic belfry; and, sheltering us at one side, a round green hill, with a fine sweep of wood from top to bottom, close and fresh as if cherished for some sacred purpose. On a low mountain, which detaches itself from a more elevated range at the opposite side of the valley, are the ruins of the Château de Beaucan, an ancient castle of the Rohan Rocheforts, which strangers usually visit. According to my chairmen, (whose beat does not lie that way,) there is nothing to be seen but an old wall. Perhaps in this old wall La Martine, had he turned his steps that way, might have found an elegy, or Béranger a thought with a profound moral in it; but my chairmen tried it by

the rules of masonry, and having no mental eyes, never once saw the high device of the Rohans over the crumbling portal, which more gifted ones would have discovered under a century's growth of ivy. I do not pretend to gifts, but I read it even from my distance, that proud motto,

"Roi ne peut, Prince ne veut, Rohan je suis."

It broke on the air like the neighing of a war-horse, or the sound of a trumpet.

Before we quitted Despourrins, I had thoroughly repaired the house, (and by the same process which had helped me to read the motto,) thrown out balconies, filled them with flowers, placed marble vases full of southern plants on the terrace parapet, trained the beautiful Spanish honeysuckle over the walls, and made the dwelling worthy of the scene it overlooks. I think, too, that I displaced here and there a corn-field to make way for a green slope, and turned out some herds of cattle to graze upon the meadows.

The owner of this neglected capability, is the son, or grandson, of the poet Despourrins, the minstrel of the Pyrenees, whose ballads are sung in every mountain-hut when the long nights of winter come, and the log burns on the hearth, and

the gossips of the hamlet roast chestnuts in the ashes, and spin out flax and stories while the candle lasts. He himself used (as the younger Thady informed us) to sing his romances in the woods at night; but the present man is no poet, and the nightingales are again in full possession.

These romances are, it is said, full of feeling, tenderness, and beauty; they are in the patois of the country,—a language prolific in expressions of sorrow, anger, love, joy, and all that poetry borrows of emotion. It is probably the same *gascon* of which Montaigne (speaking of the mountain patois) calls "un gascon singulièrement beau, sec, bref, signifiant:" and again, "nerveux, puissant, et pertinent;" but easily subduing the brief energy and male beauty for which he seems most to admire it, to the expression of the tenderest shades of sentiment. I know nothing of it but its sound, which comes to my ear as something like the delicious (and much more intelligible) old French of that sweet Clotilde de Surville,* fondest of wives

* Marguerite Eléonore Clotilde de Vallon Chalys, born 1405, and married at fifteen to the Chevalier Beranger de Surville. She was the daughter of the gallant Ferdinand de Vallon and the beautiful Pulchérie de Fay Collan, his wife. This charming poetess was herself the type of the

and most tender of poetesses, and this is spell enough for me. I know that critics, who love to destroy illusions, give a more modern date to the domestic and loving records which bear her name; but I would not, for the onyx on the finger of the Zoilus, were it rarer even than the turquoise (rich gift of the maiden Leah to her Hebrew *bachelor*) which the "most sweet Jew" and graceless child stole from her father,* deprive myself of the pleasant belief that they are hers. To whom else could they belong but to the innocent and fond wife, who, sitting by the cradle of her new-born child in her absent husband's castle, sends sweet speech and passionate notices to the liege lord and love of her young heart, the idol of her beautiful fancy? Who, but the tender mother, could have imagined those almost infantine, yet exquisitely maternal *Verselets à mon Premier Né*, beginning

"O cher enfantelet, vray pourtraict de ton pere!
Dors sur le seyn que ta bouche a pressé!
Dors petitot, cloz, amy, sur le seyn de ta mere,
Tiens doulx œillet par le somme oppressé!"

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vraie chatelaine, the high-minded woman and faithful wife of the fifteenth century; her birth-place was a château on the banks of the Ardeches in the Bas Vivarais, and it is said, that she never quitted her native province.

* Vide *Merchant of Venice*.

No one, I am sure;—and so will all say who have read the *poesies* of this charming *trouveresse*.

Between Despourrins and the abbey of St. Savin is the chapel of La Pietà, lifted up on the palm of a hill, and with a view, that makes water-colours of the poet's terrace. O it is lovely! I could look at it till I had dreamt my heart into its beauty, and forgotten that I was there myself looking at it. The habitual sky of pale silver blue above; below, the valley of peacefulness and beauty,—the scooped hills with hamlets half-buried in their woods, invisible but for their glistening roofs of purple slate and white chimneys; and the mountains with the velvet brown, the heathy purple brown, shading their broad pastures. How many stray blessings lie in our path, when a lovely day sends us out among such scenes as these,—how many thoughts written in sunbeams,—how much present gladness, or quiet reflection, deep and still, yet finding its way heavenwards, and loosening the cares of the heart as it does so!

But the crown-imperial, in the way of views, is from the abbey itself, or rather, from the garden attached to it. How beautiful it is! and in the best style of Italian colouring, like one of those

rich old pictures that nourish the fancy while they delight the eye. The côteaux of Argelez are, perhaps, more beautiful seen from the Pietà; but the look along the valley into the mountains is here almost matchless: all the magic of aërial tinting and warmth of vegetation which belong to southern countries brighten on it, and give it a character distinctly different from the more sublime, but less warmly developed scenery of Switzerland. I left my chair behind me in the village, and my companions tied their mules to the convent door; and then we passed on to the terrace, and looked down from its embowered seat upon the trelised vines, whose tender and gracefully indented leaves form a carpet of living verdure beneath the eye, and on the revel land of loveliness that lay before us; the white chapel of the Pietà standing out on its beautiful hill, with the woods below, and the blue heaven above it; the warm vapour colouring the mountains with unimaginable hues, and the mountains themselves lengthening off into shadow, as if they would bury their radiance in repose.

And here again I could have sat hour after hour delightedly, on the garden wall in the shade of the old abbey church, looking above and below, and

forward over the open loveliness of the valley, into the mysterious majesty of the mountains. The spot itself is as dry as a bundle of hay, scarcely a green leaf or the semblance of a flower, except a ragged jasmine trodden down by the careless feet kindly admitted within its enclosure, and a few straggling roses,—sweet roses! that live and bloom every where, and, as if by the force of their own beautiful will, in spite of all contingencies. But better than pinks and gillyflowers, or even than orange trees and oleanders, is the parapet on which we sat or leaned, wishing to stay there till night-fall, the landscape was so beautiful, and the still-ness—the distant country stillness, so soothing! But we had four leagues, with two huge hills in the midst of them, to repass: so we drew a long breath before our good by; then turned back again and drew another; sat down, got up, and at last—off; but with great and increasing reluctance. While dwelling on such a scene, an ineffable sense of happiness is communicated to the mind; anxiety is suspended; restlessness, bodily and mental, ap-peased; the spirit calmed while raised; and the heart content with itself, as if it reposed upon the memory of a good deed.

The word abbey—a fine grey word, and in itself a chronicle,—had led me into an error. I had expected ruins on a beautiful site, such a one as those monastic pearl-pickers, the Cistercians, and indeed monks in general, knew so well how to select; and here was no disappointment, for the spot is a rare one, and worthy of their preference; but St. Savin's abbey* exists no longer, at least in its monachal form. An old church, with a fine exterior colouring, a carved porch of ancient workmanship, and some bits of sculpture in the walls, still remain. Within the church are some curious pictures portraying the life, and death, and miracles of the saint, who is there interred under a sort of gilt baby-house; and an organ—or the skeleton of one—as old, I should think, as the date of the canonized himself, with a row of heads rudely carved at the bottom, that still contrive to wag their jaws, and shut their eyes, with a fine marrow-bone-and-cleaver rattle, when the instrument (if such it may be called) is touched; two clatter and wag as if they had only been just set going for the first time, but the third grows rigid and refractory.

There are no cloisters now, but the capitals of

* Originally founded by Charlemagne.

some small columns, which probably belonged to them, decorate the garden wall. The monks and their pillars were unsettled together by the free burghers of the old revolution, who righted rights after their own gay, careless, *coupe-gorge* fashion; and the blank, though still somewhat convent-looking house which now represents the monastery, (or may be, perhaps, its very self modernised, for we can find no one capable of informing us on the subject,) offers few mind-helping images—exteriorly at least, and we had no *billet d'entrée*; so that we must shut our eyes to see that busy night when Margaret of Navarre and her scattered train found shelter and hospitality within its walls. The same Marguerite

> "Qui des tendres amourettes
> Des moines et des nonettes
> A fait un recueil malm;"

but a very good woman, too, notwithstanding her heptameron.

The court had been water-drinking at Cauteretz, (or Caudres, as it was then called,) till they were surprised by an October deluge. Down came the rain, filling the houses, destroying the roads, swelling the torrents, which in their turn carried away

the bridges, and overflowed the country. Queen, court, and all were turned adrift: some got off through the mountains to Arragon, Roussillion, and Navarre; others, who had escaped in the same way, took shipping at Barcelona for Marseilles, while the less lucky ones tried cross-roads, and losing their way, fell among robbers, or were devoured by bears. But the queen and her exclusives paddled, or swam, or waded—for we are not told which,—to the abbey of St. Savin; where, in the naïve phrase of an extant letter of Margaret's, the abbot "logea des dames et des demoiselles dans son appartement. Il leur fournit de bons chevaux de Lavedan, de bonnes capes de Béarn, force vivres pour arriver à notre dame de Sarrance," &c.

How the fire blazed that night in the arched refectory! and how the maids of honour giggled, and wrung the night-dew out of their fair tresses, or their dark ones, and bewildered the poor monks, whose Ash-Wednesday visages must have cut a grim figure near the gay Shrovetide faces of the court damsels! Perhaps there were some of Father Philip's innocents among them, who thought such geese no bad birds; and others within whose bosoms shadows of the long gone-by may have been

called up with painful and dangerous fidelity, by the sudden apparition of such guests. Boccaccio or Chaucer would have made a merry, or perhaps a woful tale out of the adventures of that night, and called it by some quaint name,—as the Mayde's Legende, or the Monk's Stryfe, or Madam Margaret's Pilgrimage; indeed, an imagination that is neither Chaucer's or Boccaccio's might make picture out of the queen's visit, coming like a benighted Esther, with her train of dripping maids to crave hospitality of the holy abbot, knocking with royal prerogative at the gates, and then bending to receive his blessing before she passed through them.

In all positions idleness is the stagnant pool of the mind, whose fat waters generate corrupt vegetation; but the idleness of a monastic life is much more likely to be prolific of evil, than the idleness of the world. The last is a free-will profession, adopted voluntarily by minds suited to it, and commonly taking a sociable or a meddling turn,—sure, usually, at the long run to tire others, and often ending in the horrors of lassitude; but exempt from the solitary and—for its possessor—dangerous character which it assumes when forced

upon an ardent, brooding, or passionate nature. Who can tell what melancholy mischief the chance visit of the courtly company may have worked among the brothers of the order, if any of such mould were cribbed within the abbey walls on that memorable evening?

The benedictine monk, St. Savin, had gone to burn his eternal candle in another world centuries before "la Marguerite des Marguerites" halted within its walls. He was a pattern of sanctity, and professor of miracles; and carried a candle always about him, which was instantly lighted by being placed in his bosom, and though it appeared to burn like other candles, never was consumed.

But though I talk thus lightly—perhaps irreverently, of the holy Savin, yet he was an anchoret of the old *pâte*. Noble by birth, being the son of a count of Poitou in the time when counts were sovereigns, Spaniard by country, being a native of Barcelona; pious as the fathers of the desert, he came to his solitude, resigning the honours of his race, subduing the ardour of his southern blood, and, with the same courageous indifference to all worldly indulgences which St. Jerome carried with him to his Syrian desert, built himself a

cabin in the wilderness, and died in the odour of sanctity in his Thebaid.

Quitting the church, every form and variety of *goître* pressed round us. The air of the village, which, such as it is, boasts a Roman origin, is (owing perhaps to its arcades and a certain ruinous look) perfectly Italian; so are the vines, flinging about their garlands from branch to branch in the sweet vagabond, and I believe useless, Italian way; for good wine, or rather its parent fruit, needs a prop, though according to Rosalind no bush. We did not return by the same path which we had followed in going to St. Savin, but descending by a more rapid one, looked down through an open wood on some abrupt slopes, now in their after-grass beauty; and dropping into the road a short way below Pierrefitte, sat down beside a clear pool, and amused ourselves, while we waited for our carriage, with the gambols of that pretty fly, the *demoiselle*—indeed of myriads of them, as they hung upon the broad green leaves that grew about, or in it; admiring their dark wings—thin and shining like a sort of old-fashioned crackling gauze, of which I forget the name; watching their light and elegant movements; blowing shepherd's

clocks; and making field nosegays; poor sports, some may think, but not I for one, who love them nearly as well as when I used to run out in a storm of rain, crossing slippery fields, and brooks too when they came in my way, to gather double violets or jonquils, with an inverted geranium-pot on my head to keep the rain off, being a greatly preferable thing (I used to think) to a bonnet. Our posies, which were beautiful, soon withered; and we were obliged, after having nursed them up in cool leaves, to throw them away. In the fields, flowers grow wild and lavishly, but rarely long outlive the gathering; in a garden, care, skill, and cherishing, with a good soil—even sometimes with a meagre one,—puts sap into their stalks, and gives strength, brightness, and permanency to their beauty: but the hot-house forces them into a sickly maturity, which being artificially produced, loses at once its freshness, and dies worthlessly if removed to a natural atmosphere,—in all which there is a moral, that I leave to others to find out.

As we drove along homewards, admiring the black pines, and fine-drawn peaks of a wild spot in the gorge of Cauteretz, we observed a man bare-headed and with naked feet, kneeling before a rock

and praying devoutly. The figure, taken with the scene and hour, was striking; and perhaps we might have grown poetical about it, if a sturdy urchin, jackal to the anchoret, had not jumped over the fence, and setting up the true canting whine of a regular country beggar, enlightened us as to the length, breadth, and depth, of the holy man's piety. This devout display was of course meant to gull the simple folk who were returning homewards from the market of Argelez, one with a purchase of goats, another with a refractory pig, or a calf thrown across his shoulders, and a third with an osier cage full of chickens, with a skittish girl (sometimes a pair of them) belonging to each party, hanging loose amongst the more occupied members, and seeming to think it doing quite enough to bring herself home in safety. After the beautiful stillness of St. Savin, our *angle* seemed like Piccadilly, or the Boulevards, quite a town-confusion of sounds and press of carriages,—five country coaches, and a twenty-inside sort of omnibus waggon, through all which our double phaeton (hired for the occasion) steered its way with difficulty.

Monday. As I looked at the mountains to-day

and thought of Spain, I fancied that I should like to peep again into Don Quixote: so sent for it to the library, but it was not on the list; neither was Gil Blas, nor the Bachelor, nor Hurtado or Quevedo, or any thing else that treated of Spanish life or manners. Nothing was read (according to the shopwoman) but "L'Echaffaud," and that was engaged ten deep.

A very general want in small company-places* is a good and *appropriate* circulating-library. A few indifferent novels usually constitute the ground-work of the stock, pulled up by "Nôtre Dame de Paris," or "La Peau de Chagrin;" perhaps "Ourika," or "Cinq Mars," or Walter Scott—the general bark draught and purifier of all circulating libraries abroad as at home. One is quite as sure of finding him spread out at full length between the Duchesse d'Abrantes and Zimmerman—the usual alpha and omega of a French country catalogue, as between "Abbey," (of Grasville,) and "Zofloya, or the Moor," our customary head and tail pieces.

* I will not say here particularly, for the catalogue is more solid than usual, only one can never get the books named in it.

After the want of books,—which to me, who love them almost as dearly as Chaucer's Oxford scholar did, is no small privation,—comes the want of a piano. There is not even a spinet to be hired here, and those who wish to exercise voice or finger, must ask leave to do so (when there is a chance of finding the room unoccupied) at the *Cercle;* where they are probably no sooner seated, than two or three anxious faces, peeping in at the door, take care to let them know that they are intruders, and that an arranged card party, impatient of delay, find the

> - - - - - - - "bout
> Of linked sweetness,"

far too "long drawn out" for their pleasure, or patience either.

Here are no table d'hôtes, as in Switzerland and Germany,—at least none of any note: dinners are furnished by traiteurs, (of whom there are several) at a moderate price, and of proportionate quality. From three in the afternoon till seven in the evening, young girls shoot by in all directions, poising on their heads the enormous basket, where four and four, or six and six, are duly arranged with strict attention to numerical exact-

ness, and somewhat less to the filling up. Two celebrated beauties are among the number of these breathing Caryatides; one bold and lavish, with a free bright eye and animated movement; the other so retiring, that it is difficult to get even a glimpse of her fine Greek profile. In the class immediately above that of the labouring peasant, there is a great deal of beauty scattered about in the south of France; but the downright country women are in general tanned and ill-featured. I have seen, however, some handsome exceptions, particularly in the Landes, and have been told that at Marseilles, and other parts of the south that approach or border on the Mediterranean, fine heads, and shapes to match them, are the common growth of the country.

But the soil of Cauteretz grows coarser stuff; no handsome faces visible, and few even comely ones among the peasant girls who throng in here on holidays. The men are a finer race; but all are remarkable for an air of peculiar decency, and for being much better and more comfortably clad, than persons in their class of life usually are; their dark brown berrêts are generally in good condition, and their strong cloth

jackets and trousers of the same colour, sound and unpatched. The women wear close gowns, also of brown cloth, with scarlet capulets, laid on at the edge with black; to which, on dressy days, they add large white neck-handkerchiefs; and when stiffened up in their best gear, look precisely like the figures on the ancient monuments set upright. The close, grave robe, down to the ground, the quaint capulet framing in the face between two straight lines that terminate abruptly below the waist, falling back and disclosing the arms beneath muffled almost to the fingers' ends, are all of the true tomb-stone character; and if the face be spare, and the eyelid long and heavy, make the exact chatelaine of the gothic sepulchre.

The moral atmosphere of a watering-place is rarely, if ever, of the purest; and one is not surprised to find a little—and I believe it is but very little—town-corruption in the valley of Cauteretz. In one shape, however, it does appear, and prominently; the spirit of higgling has an existence and consistency decidedly indicative of the mineral-spring conscience, which always has the short season before its eyes, serving at once as temptation and excuse. The younkers who hawk about nose-

gays and plates of wood strawberries, are as finished extortioners as the most accomplished ones of the capital. A little girl comes to me every other evening, opens the door without a preliminary knock, steals in noiselessly, being barefooted; and when my happy tribe are gone farther off on a ramble than my feet can carry me, and that I think myself alone, is often standing at my table, with the scarlet capulet thrown back from a soft pretty face and her basket extended towards me, for a moment or two before her gentle *hem!* attracts my attention. She usually brings four small nosegays, each consisting of a rose and a few gay-looking weeds, for which she asks about as much as a Parisian would pay for a ball bouquet; yet it cannot be said that she means to impose, for instead of beginning with an exorbitant demand, and, when refused, dropping down to another, which, though so much lower than the first as to sound (by comparison) like a bargain, is still enormous, she sticks with the courage of a martyr to her first price—probably the one fixed on by her mother; nor can any thing subdue her quiet obstinacy, or change the inveterate *non, non,* which is all that she has learned to express in

regular French. Considering the quality of her wares, and the facility with which trefoil, and meadow-sweet, and buttercups are gathered here, her demand is a dishonest one; but there is a show of integrity in her stubbornness that carries off the extortion. After all, perhaps a casuist in morals would say, that where a choice is allowed there can be no extortion, and condemn the word altogether.

A milliner at Paris once said to a lady when I was present, "I do not affect to sell bargains, or to content myself with small profits, but I never change my prices: these, as well as the goods, are before you; you have the free liberty of option, and a certainty that there is no *particular* imposition intended, as the prices are never altered: it is for you to buy or not, as you please." One could not call this tricking, and yet the intention was certainly to get more for the merchandise than in strict probity ought to have been asked.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STORM, AND ITS EFFECT ON THE MIND—LE SAINT SUAIRE AND ITS VIRTUES—EXCURSION TO LAC DE GAUBE—OPENING OF THE VALLEY OF MARCADAU—MARVELLOUS CHAIRMEN—SPANISH FANCIES—MY ROCKING-HORSE—A PAUSE AT THE CERISET—DREAMS INTERRUPTED—THE CERISET—PONT D'ESPAGNE—VALLEY OF THE LAC DE GAUBE—CHARACTER OF ITS SCENERY—RETURN AT EVENING—DANCING CHILDREN—FINE GOLD AND HARDER METAL.

THE other day I quarrelled with a thunder-storm for its muffled tone and small artillery; but last night we had such a wiping off of scores,—such a hurtling in the heavens! lightning sheeting the earth with its blue glare and streaming in at the unshuttered windows, while the loud thunder came booming from the distance with a deep forward roll, like a mighty vessel labouring through the clouds and throwing off its tremendous broadsides; and then the last unearthly sound,—the retreating one,—dying with slow rebound along the hills until it was lost in fearful silence, quickly and

suddenly broken by a fresh uproar, more awfully near, or more solemnly distant than the former.

What plenitude of power is in a storm! with what a voice it cries aloud in the wilderness, compassing the earth in its mighty sweep, and mocking the strength and violence of man! When the stars that keep nightly watch in the firmament seem extinguished, and the blue dome into whose fields of light the timid imagination fears not to adventure, feeling that nothing but joy, and love, and praise, can dwell in such a heaven, is transformed into a tossed and shapeless desert, the heart sinks,—seeing in its lurid darkness images that it had not dared to think of, and hearing in its deadly and portentous sounds the same voice, that when the condemned to everlasting punishment inquire what hour of the night it is,—as if the passage of time could allay their torments,—answers, "Eternity!"*

Such storms as that of last night are not heard, even in countries subject to their visitations, without some feeling of alarm, though familiarity strips danger of many of its terrors; but the unknown

* This fine and fearful image was presented by a Christian missionary to the minds of his Indian followers.

voice, the unfathomable power, never entirely loses its hold on the mind. Science may prove that the shock and the flash are the effects of natural and explicable causes; but in the volume of the mind is a page on which the might and majesty of the omnipotent hand, that impels the storm and sends it reeling through the heavens, are written in everlasting characters, in defiance of the demonstrations of chemistry. "It is the Lord that commandeth the waters, it is the glorious God that maketh the thunder."

Calm again to-day, and soft as a Cuyp, but not sunny, and (being sabbath) the Basque handkerchief, flat and floating, the broad Arragonian hat, the berrêt of Bigorre, the capulet and capuchon, madrass of Gascony, and Paris bonnet, are all afloat, and the bellowing tempest quite forgotten in the re-assuring light of day. There is no rubber-out like daylight; wild dreams, wild fears, dark thoughts and evil ones,—doubts, presages, all are effaced by the application of a sunbeam, and not, like the traces of a heavy pencil, doubtfully, but fairly obliterated, and the blank surface restored to its original whiteness.

Among the many groupes scattered about, is

one composed of an old blind man, his wife, and a little boy, who have been chaunting litanies from door to door since seven in the morning. I have just made a penny purchase of one of their books of marvels, a rare morsel, in which a firm belief in the efficacy of the *Saint Suaire* (the holy winding-sheet) is earnestly inculcated as the special means of salvation; and a hundred days' indulgence promised by Pope Clement VIII., whose word is not a whit the less valid for his being dead upwards of two hundred years, to all such as carry about with them the precious pennyworth. Seven Pater Nosters and seven Ave Marias, repeated seven times in honour of the holy grave-cloth, procure for the suppliant the power of delivering, at each separate repetition, five souls out of purgatory, to be chosen "à volonté" among such of his or her deceased friends* as may be supposed entitled to a place in the region of expiatory punishment. Three orisons follow, simply and rather gracefully composed; these it appears were found in the holy sepulchre itself, and the assurance of their sacred origin is given like a naked truth, without any superfluous allegation, nothing to weaken the

* "Cinq ames de ses amis."

force of internal evidence. The royal town of Besançon glorifies in this precious relic: twice every year it is exhibited to the faithful, when those who are possessed with demons find (if they be also believers) no difficulty in getting rid of their turbulent inmates.

The canticles which follow, are all recitals of miracles performed by the power of the *Saint Suaire*; and legend-loving children will find amongst them the story of their old friend the Christian soldier, attacked near to the city of Bel-grade by four Pagan robbers; who, perceiving that he still lived, and even appeared unhurt, though pierced through and through like a cullender, became, as well they might, converted on the spot, and remained ever after firm believers in the miraculous virtues of the blessed winding-sheet, a shred of which the invulnerable soldier always carried about with him. The sale of this little book is immense: every capulet, without exception, lays down her penny; even the brown berrêts (especially the old ones) are active purchasers; and open mouths, gaping like the beaks of hungry birds, stretch and stiffen under the galvanic influence of astonishment.

To this emotion of wonder succeeds (generally speaking) the sentiment of perfect conviction,—and here lies the danger. If the peasant believes that, by merely possessing this little book, and gabbling over a certain number of prayers in a certain given time, he can gain a hundred day's indulgence for individual sin, and a sort of omnipotence over the hereafter of his friends into the bargain, his trust in the mercy of God and the benefit of redemption becomes superfluous, and a good life a work of supererogation. There is no bridle upon sin, for even if you should die in the midst of it, your surviving friends can at any time buy you out of your difficulties; it is but a penny and ten minutes' mumbling, and you are cleared for paradise. A comfortable sop for folks of an easy swallow; but for those whose mental subjection is still incomplete, and whose reason rejects such childish fatuity, the very knowledge of such a faith is a push towards scepticism. Many a man has fallen into unbelief, because he could not command credulity; I mean many an uninstructed one, for the action of enlightened reason reinstates belief, should it have tottered, by the effort with which it combats ignorance.

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a way too sweet and winning to
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and I believe the show lake of th
are deficient in that fine relief to
Our cavalcade consisted of four
chairmen, each chair being provi
bearers. The males of our part
boxed up, went on horseback as
but it was only a snatch of luxury
became impracticable even for ou
A little beyond the baths of the
to the Pont d'Espagne* turns to
mountains, drawing nearer to eac
the valley into a gorge, which ope
a fine clustering of peaks. Two
down from the right and left, l

which flows through the valley of Cauteretz. For some time the road winds round and round the mountain sides, overhanging the torrent or descending to its roar; then climbing up again into the region of silence, seems to fly, not only from the noise of man, but from the stir of nature. As far as the last baths, and for some way farther, the road is tolerably good; but soon after they are passed, it continues fading away from road to track, till its line is almost effaced amidst the rocky fragments that are strewed about every where.*

How the chairmen manage to make their way, Providence, who seems to have bestowed on them the step and instinct of the izard, best knows. Like that animal, they can balance themselves on the point of a precipice; spring from one loose stone to another, which appears to preserve its equilibrium only by the transient pressure of the foot; run up perfectly smooth, and all but perpendicular rocks, and down again with such rapidity, that to sit steadily in the chair requires the *aplomb* of a Dutch burgomaster; pick their way through

* The road is now greatly improved, and accessible for horses as far as the Pont d'Espagne, even to the lake, for the very bold. (1836).

granite fragments with the sagacity of an Andalusian mule; poise their slight machine and its lading on the edge of a precipice; hoist it in the air over rocks,—and all this without jerk or stumble. Nothing, indeed, can be more agreeable or less fatiguing than the movement; and the wonderful activity and steadiness with which one is borne along, gives immediate confidence even to the most timid.

Fine combinations of rock, fantastic in form but always grand; fore-ground of pines rich and dark, with an underwood of glistening beech. Ascended through groves of pine, noble ones, to the cascade of the Ceriset: its first rush is bright and feathery, and its arrowy flight through a chasm in the vertical rocks whips up the fancy, and runs away with it just as Don Gayferos did with the fair and faithful Melisandra; which comparison may appear far fetched to those who have not the kingdom of Arragon at the other side of the mountain, but to those who have, comes as naturally as good day.

For my own part, I have done nothing since I came here but run over, mentally, all the snatches of Spanish story, all the recollections of Spanish story-tellers, with which a memory indifferently furnished, and more hearsay than reading, have sup-

plied me. If I have not talked, it is not because I have not thought of them, but rather that I feel the necessity of reining in my fancy; and instead of unwisely essaying a prance from Ruy Diez to the 'Great Captain,' or a jerk from Lopez to Yriarte, contenting myself with a quiet see-saw on my rocking-horse (which after all is but a wooden one) without thinking, like the knight of La Mancha, that it is flying through the air; while others, whose eyes are not bandaged, can see that it merely tilts up and down on the the same narrow stripe of earth; but as to flying,—"not a jot, not a jot."

It is the Ceriset that flies along all the time, not me; and with that faithless constancy, still vanishing yet present, which in brooks and floods is only a moral lesson, though in a human being we might call it deceit, and talk of false surfaces and under currents. There is something of exceeding loneliness in the noise of a waterfall; it does not startle like the cry of the wild bird in the wilderness; it is not angry or prophetic like its accusing or mournful scream; some, even, might call its burst gay, (I speak of waterfalls, not cataracts); but to me there is in its sullen music a constant grieving

sound, which, according with its solitary course, makes harmony with the forests and the rocks, and with the heart too. I love these voices of the desert,—the bird, the flood, the wind in the holes of the rocks, and seldom hear them without feeling my mind carried back to scriptural images in their grand and desolate beauty, or their grave and continuous sweetness.

At this moment an iris, the most visionary object which nature offers to the sight, throws its vague splendour over the Ceriset; and from the spot on which I sit inditing—not good matter, but first impressions, the freshest always if not the truest,—not a movement of life is visible, not a sound heard but the rush of the waters, and the crackling of the insect people hard at work in the grass, the most summerish of all summer noises. All but myself have run down the hill to look at the first boil-over of the torrent; and I have taken a patch of dry moss for my seat, and have just discovered that when we feel most, we do not think, and that I have been sitting for the last ten minutes with my eyes in the forest, plunged over head and ears in one of those delicious reveries that has not the fraction of a thought in it.

I had just got so far, and shaking myself out of my reverie, was still sitting on my bank, fancying that such scenes as I then looked upon might, with the help of a little Juan Fernandez vegetation, have surrounded the cabin of Robinson Crusoe, and thinking of the foot-print in the sand, that fine and fearful incident to which genius has given a solitary power, more awful in its singleness than the war-whoop of an army of cannibals, when up came a party of grumbling Toulousains, who soon set me on my feet again, and drove me out of my Indian solitude. Being alone when they came down upon me, I felt awkward, and moved off to a little distance, but could not put myself out of hearing of the stentorian voice of a speculating moralist, who contrived to make his elaborate praises of nature's works, and of their beautiful uses, end—I forget how—in the anticipation of fresh trout *délicieusement savourée*, which appeared to await the party at the Lac de Gaube.

The graceful Ceriset put out all other falls till we came to the Pont d'Espagne, which gives its name to the valley, though many sparkle through the dark pines in the interval,—as the Cascade des Boussés, le Pas de l'Ours, &c.; one of which (I

think it is the Boussés) is very sweetly placed in the middle of a low and rocky amphitheatre covered with pines. Granite without its accompanying desolation, patches of bright and flowery turf, soft beech trees, and an abundant carpeting of rhododendron; innumerable rills fresh and clear, that, bursting from the crevices in the rocks, fall in soft showers on the turf; while the Gave, in its quiet moments, ripples round little green patches, that look as if they had been blown off the sides of the mountains, and dropped into the current with their roots downwards.

The cascades in this valley are not cataracts,—a huge word, which belongs to Niagara and others of those great river-falls, where the flood misses footing and tumbles down in its whole breadth and bulk from hill to valley. But the fall of the Pont d'Espagne is bright and lonely,—splendid, perhaps, after the first melting of the snows; but at present the upper part wants water, and the precipitous stream seems (at its first leap) to cling too closely to the surface of the rock over which it descends. It is a sylvan fall, that looks as if it had slipped over the rocks on its way from a forest pilgrimage; full of picture, and happy in its sweet

accompaniments of shade and solitude, and in a sort of undressed wildness not too strongly marked for its power and character, which an austere and overbearing nature would have effaced, but enough for beauty and dignity. Its great charm is a certain presence of solitude, which almost tempts one to fancy it a discovery; its fault, perhaps, the being seen too much in bits,—full, rushing, sparkling bits; but one does not know where to look for the whole.

Higher up than the Pont d'Espagne the pine is master. We ascended through a noiseless forest amidst fine still trees, some erect and stately, others prostrate as the storm had left them, or suspended like rude bridges across the pathway, or opening to make room for a patch of sunny turf, covered with innumerable flowers. Some of the trees were hung over with a white, fleecy moss, probably the growth of many winters, that falls from the points of the branches in long flakes Descending to the lake, it becomes wild and dreamy as a Highland superstition. The Vignemale,* fur-

* The Vignemale is the highest mountain of the French Pyrenees; the Maladetta—the loftiest of the whole chain—being, as well as the Mont Perdu, on the Spanish side.

rowed with glaciers, closes the gorge; and though still at a considerable distance, appears to rise from the very borders of the Lac de Gaube,—itself a mountain lake of wild and melancholy aspect; still, and pure, and blue, as if it never had been rippled by net or oar, or stirred by wind. A fisherman's hut, on a gentle swell of green land, and a fairy lawn at the southern end with a few trees upon it, alone break the precipitous lines that descend from the tops of the mountains, and hide themselves in the waters. In some places there is no room even for a foot-path, nor sign of life any where but on the spot before the hut. No oar glimmers on the bosom of the lake, no bird flies over it, no summer leaf rustles on its bare shore; and yet, notwithstanding the cold glaciers, and the bleak mountains, and the poverty of vegetation, it is a gentle, rather than a savage scene: the influence of a southern climate is sensibly felt; it is visible in the colouring of the air, in the lights that fall upon the water. In Switzerland, this little lake would be called a pool, or perhaps passed over entirely; but here, where lakes have been almost forgotten, it has slid into celebrity.

A flat boat, something between a canoe and a

box, is drawn up into a creek, and an old man sits mending his nets beside it. The figure is of a piece with the scene; but two saucy-looking women who stand at the door of the hut, inviting us to taste the trout of the lake, which they are said to dress in perfection and to charge for exorbitantly, spoil it a little,—but only a little; for we turn our backs upon them, and have found out a green hillock of our own, where we sit musingly, or in pleasant company with each other's thoughts, looking into the deep waters, and up to the darkening mountains, and listening to the little bursts or heaves of sound that are not song, or speech, or step; but which, in the deepest solitude of the forest or the glen, break in upon the general silence of nature.

As we returned homewards through the pine woods, we stopped to look back upon the quiet lake: it was in shadow, and evening had already dropped upon its mountains; while a valley opening from the west crossed them, with a line of light that had a whole day of sunshine in it. The contrast was exquisite, so were the lights and shadows that fell upon the pines; the ground was covered with wild pinks and other flowers, and the air

There is something inexpress
stillness of a wood at the close
pine tree, which has no light
as the breeze passes over it, and
darkness doubles that of evenir
visionary in its gloom that work
fancy. The air, the light, the
over the face of the heavens, see
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ing wind, it descends from the
last beams of the setting sun.

From the baths, where the
and leaves the silent valley to
fisherman's hut on the banks of
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which had never heard the mariner's song, or been visited by the sail of the stranger.

There was a time, before my thoughts, my feelings, my entire being was shared with others, when to have passed the evening hours alone in this wild valley would have been to me entire delight. In my youth I loved few things so dearly as a solitary walk in a still grove, or along a moonlit avenue; how my thoughts moved forward with my steps, how my steps tarried with my thoughts; how they flew along with the clouds, or reposed in the still moonshine! The sky awakened, the trees sheltered them; the flowers that covered the earth, the brooks that moistened it, the bird that sang on the briar, caused a gentle excitement, a soft stirring in the fancy,—pure as virtue, beneficent as repose. It is all present to me at this moment, and the tender and deep feeling with which I then enjoyed such things is present with them.

It is three hours' walk, or rather trot, according to the chairmen's step, from Cauteretz to the lake; and two hours and a half to return. Our cavalcade entered the village gaily, and found a circle formed round two dancing children, one of whom had prodigious vigour, and the other more beauty

than I have seen for many a day,—quite a dream of a creature, so delicately put together, all of fine gold, and with a soft, easy, half shy, half confident grace, and a look of birth, which—if not rubbed out by vulgar contact before she grows up to girlhood, will provoke many a fanciful conjecture. Poor thing! it was sad to see so pretty and so helpless a being in training for such a trade; but childhood is not prescient, and she had a happy careless air, as if her dancing-dog life was one of joy and indulgence. It gave me pleasure to hear that the man who fiddled for these children was their father, and to see that a decent-looking woman made one of the troop, and caressed the living flower as if she really was her mother,—not her kidnapper. The elder, too, came in for her full share of encouragement, and, her professional talent being evidently the most promising, had considerably more spangles on her petticoat than the beauty; who, while her sister cut fours with surprising agility, tottered on her little feet, made false steps, and looked so graceful, and so excessively happy while she did so, that one could not help fancying, that with more talent she would have had less charm.

CHAPTER XX.

POLITICS AT CAUTERETZ—PATRIOTS, REAL AND IMAGINARY—HIDDEN TREASURES—A WAY TO GET AT THEM—THE GHOST SEER—THE CHASE—DAY-BREAK NOISES—THE CRY OF THE HOUNDS—MUSIC AND PAINTING COMPARED—THE TAMBOURIN AND THE BALLADE OF BIGORRE—IDLENESS WITHOUT VICE—THE BALLOON.

As every niche has its political affair, every glass of water its tempest,* Cauteretz, not to be behind hand with other places, would provoke fate a little; and so at the last ball a few white lilies were stuck round the sconces, and two or three cavaliers wore the same insignia in their button-holes. When lo! pounce came the mayor, chief grocer of the district, and with 'one fell swoop' mowed them all down like Macduff's chickens. Then it was bruited that the opposition party was to make manifest at the old *Cercle*, and that we were likely

* Frederick the Great used to say, that when he heard of the troubles of the Republic of Geneva, he always thought of a tempest in a glass of water.

who consider themselves as going alc
moral, intellectual, and political move
times; and who look upon an old dy
same light as an old glove, curious as
if a great hand has worn it, but ot
thing that has outlived its uses, and m
aside. While the new one, be it of
even bear-skin with the rough side ou
shaped like a child's frost-glove, cur
mitten, or any thing, in short, except th
four-finger and thumb cut, is always
a good fit and a beautiful bit of stitc
it chance (as sometimes happens) to
trying on.

But what may have been brewin
now be known, for the sudden appari
préfet dressed in official frowns and

him doing Jove between the two proprietors of the York and Lancaster *Cercles*, who both looked as if caught in some petty larceny; and thus ended the show of opinion and its diversities, meditated by the adverse parties of Cauteretz.

The present French seem decidedly averse to political repose; peace seems to them like servitude, or at best an acknowledgment of weakness. They resemble the invalid whose irritable nerves forbid all stationary comfort, who cries "turn me on my right side," and is no sooner obeyed than he moans to be turned again upon the left, on which he lies but for a moment when he desires to be placed in an upright position. Besides, they begin already to discover, or imagine, that they have been playing at a round game, in which the stakes are general, but the pool belongs only to one. There are several Carlists here, and a few gentlemen patriots, not many: gentlemen sometimes prefer waiting till the sentiment of patriotism has taken its station; or drop it, when the greasy rogues who call themselves the people start up to act upon *their* principles. Inherent aristocrats are likely, from the circumstances of their education and early impressions, to make unsteady patriots, (tak-

ing the word in its popular sense,) though believing themselves, and often being, very sincere ones. The bold and sublime sound of the word liberty, the present excitement, the always hoped for and sometimes immediate fame, the "loud applause and aves vehement" of the people, enthral ardent natures,—I do not speak of glorious ones,—and flatter such as have been pampered, perhaps goaded, into irritability, and who believing themselves reformers, are only malcontents. The patriot aristocrat of such mould and shaping, is staunch to the general outline; but the details offend his nice susceptibilities, his patrician blood rises up against the too close freedom of the vulgar tribune, and the shabby strong-minded varlets who would go halves with him, soil his imagination by their contact. The most arrogant practical aristocrats are often theoretical liberals: query,—are they likely to be sincere ones? Charles the Tenth used to say, that there were only two men in Europe who had never changed their political opinions,—himself and Lafayette.

It is easy to say, "Let man be free, let all be equal sharers in the open patrimony of freedom;" but when plebeian Jack or Dick starts up at the

call, and rubs his greasy skirts against the delicate doublet of the privileged, then liberalism stiffens into arrogance, and all the indigenous feelings which the vanity of political chieftainship, or the purer sense of political right, has subdued for the time being, work upwards, and re-appear upon the surface. Of the glorious nature, of what it feels, dares, would suffer, for the sake of that,—be it throne or people, which it holds sacred, I say nothing, feeling that the sentiment of reverence lies too deep for words.

This morning, as I returned from the springs, my chairmen overtook some persons who were conversing gravely; and as we kept side by side for some time, I heard, without intending it, all that passed between them. The principal orator was an odd-looking man, decently but rather singularly dressed; he spoke apparently with reference to a portion of earth which he held in his hand, and which he said contained a certain quantity of gold. None knew (he added) the riches of the Pyrenees;* there were streams issuing from their bosom that ran gold, and mines hidden within them of inex-

* Marca quotes Strabo as an authority for the existence of gold mines in the mountains of Labour, and the Basse Navarre.

haustible wealth: to say nothing of the treasures which the Moors had buried in their entrails, and which we daily trod upon without being aware of their neighbourhood.

He was listened to with great attention,—I thought credulity; and his reasoning, yet enthusiastic manner, seemed favourable to quackery, could there have been any inducement to its exercise in this out-of-the-way place. I have seen him pass since, but cannot make out who he is; perhaps a charlatan, perhaps a visionary, yet not singular in his opinion (here at least), though strikingly so in his manner of expressing it. The belief in hidden treasure is (I am told) as general at this side of the Pyrenees as in the kingdom of Grenada itself.

The same belief prevails in Ireland among the people; and many an idler forsakes her wheel to "scratch for the *gould*,"—to use the phrase of a half mad, half cunning woman, whom I once met with in an Irish hut; and who gravely assured me that she was sometimes out with the *good people*, as she called the fairies, for days together, and knew of certain means by which the treasures of the Catholics could be discovered. "But the dark

man is there (she said), sitting upon a stone close by; and if the moon shines upon your pickaxe, the Lord have mercy on your soul! for the first stroke of it will be for your own grave."

To this she added, that it was to her intimacy with the dead that she owed her knowledge of their secrets, and very liberally offered to instruct me in a mode of throwing the head suddenly back; by which movement, accompanied by certain mysterious words, ghosts might be raised at any time. She had spent the night (and she said it boastingly) in the company of the dead; upon which the family of the cabin turned up their eyes with a sorrowful believing look, at once expressive of compassion and awe. One of them, a beautiful Spanish-looking girl, whose eyes shone as if there were lights behind them, told me afterwards, that those who had the mark upon them for ghost-seeing, were bad people who had not come round to the church, and were tormented; their sufferings (she said) were terrible; and added, that the woman had staid all night with them, for they dared not refuse her a shelter; and that she and her people had made a noise like the howling of the last day.*

* Verbatim.

I do not know what people go after here in the shooting way,—nothing I believe that they ever come up with, for I have not seen even a *brochette* since we arrived here;* but a vast deal of business is done among the echoes. When I hear a shot in the distance, I often think of England, and of the cheerful images connected with its autumn scenery. A woman's life in a sporting establishment is not perhaps, at all times, a pleasant one; yet I know few women who have not loved the associations, and felt interested in the hazards of the anxious and exciting chase; who do not remember with a sort of affection the early call at break of day, when the shrill sudden whistle, the preparatory chirp, the stir of leaves, the lowing of cattle, the call of the huntsman, the answer of the hounds—deep-mouthed and musical, and all the mingled sounds from bush, brake, field, and farm-yard, salute the light with their many-tongued "good-morrow;" and while the bees are bustling in the honey-beds, and the mavis and laverock still hymning their pretty matins, are all suddenly effaced by that true chorus of hilarity—the cry of

* The season for bear and izard hunting, is the early spring or autumn.

the hounds. A cry so full of health, cheerfulness, sport impatient to begin, and gay defiance, that no other combination of sounds, however skilfully arranged, can produce the same effect upon the mind.

All out-of-doors enjoyment, every thing that brings us nearer to nature, has charm in it. I can thoroughly comprehend how the chase might become a passion, if it were not for its cruelty,—all *Methodism*, a Di Vernon of nineteen once said to me, and wondered how a reasonable woman could talk such stuff. But, stuff or not, the thought of the poor hunted animal is always a stumbling-block in the way of my sporting propensities.

We have little music here; the peasants do not sing as they work in the fields, nor the women as they sit before their doors at evening: there are no horns in the forest, or wild voices in the glens, at least that I have heard. Even if the pipe of the shepherd be silent, one expects the music of song: song accords so naturally with the feelings, pleasures, and occupations of a country life, that the ear longs for it, and is disappointed at its absence. Did ever pastoral poet fill the mind with such a sweet succession of country images as are awakened by the *rantx des vaches*, when it comes

in the stillness of a summer's evening, floating downwards from the hills, and filling the valleys below with its wild melody? I miss it here; I miss the sad and simple music of the Irish glens, and Highland valleys; I miss the Alp-horn with its day-break sound and mountain associations, and listen—with regret that it should have hitherto been in vain—for the sweet airs of the mountain Pyrenees, of which I had such charming anticipations. They are sung (we are told) at the winter fire-side gatherings: but I do not hear them at the cabin door or in the open field, as I had hoped to do.

No one honours the art of painting more than I do. Few feel more intensely the outdrawing effect of its power on the mind, the memory, and the imagination, its sway over time and space, and the magic skill with which it reproduces, in seemingly unchecked dimensions, all that nature has made of sublime, or fair, or wonderful; embalming, by other and more precious means than the swathes and spices of Egypt, the body—with the mind in it—of all that genius and virtue have made great, or beauty lovely; imaging for each a character of scenery, a period of time, a sphere of action in harmonious consonance with the leading

object, and endowing the whole with the rich and adequate expression which almost becomes movement as art pours life into it. Yet, even with the great debt of individual enjoyment which I owe to painting on my memory, I still feel that music addresses itself more directly, not only to the emotions of the heart, but also to the higher faculties of the mind.

Many, I know, think otherwise, and some have talked of music as fuelling crime; others will have it that the love of music is often found in vicious natures, citing Nero, Charles the Ninth, and Foulques, the terrible bishop of Toulouse—himself a troubadour (and from choice) in early life, as examples. Shakspeare, that great master of the secrets of man's nature, was of a different opinion; so have been other pure and exalted spirits, and many pious ones, who have found comfort in it. Music may sometimes enervate, but how often does it elevate, inspire, console, and soothe the turbulent passions into calm? saddening sometimes, but rather with tender than with bitter sorrow; leading often to acts of heroism or piety, never, I believe, to base or cruel ones. Sad music enters into the soul, bringing thought with it;

bright music fuses thought into fancy, without destroying its power. A true lover of music feels its absence as a loss of nourishment to the deep and fine-toned faculties of the mind; and missing the voice in which man emulates the seraph, or the combination of sounds so subtly blended that the effect seems pure and unelaborate singleness, thanks even the wren for its chirp; but if it be the lark that sings, gives out his soul to be lifted skyward on its melody.

Painting embodies thought, but however sublimely, still by known images: music awakens it, but leaves it to incarnate its own fancies. The altar-piece is Raffaelle's; the majesty of holiness, the sanctity of innocence, the entireness of sacrifice is in it; gloriously designated, but by familiar symbols. The *Miserere* is Allegri's; the soul drinks in its till then unknown harmonies, and for the moment believing them celestial, detaches itself from bondage, and soaring upwards, loses its identity in the fellowship of angels.

In one point, however, painting has an immense superiority. Music has no means of perpetuating material images; of setting before us in actual and almost living freshness the distant land-

scape, the unknown sea, the trackless desert; of bringing us into familiar contact with the illustrious or imaginary dead; and more, of giving back, at least, the effigies of those whom the grave has closed upon. Sweet and precious privilege! worth to the fond and sorrowful heart all the rest put together. Another gigantic advantage; Raffaelle embodied his own conceptions, but Handel is dependent on the executive powers of others, and liable to be disfigured by them.

It so happens that, while I write, the sound of instruments comes from a distance, with the slow approach of a procession. Yesterday a public dinner took place here, in commemoration of the great days of July; and now the chairmen, who have been banqueting in the Parc at the expense of the patriots, are dancing along the street, preceded by the national colours, to the tuneless music of a whistling fife and squeaking fiddle. The fifer holds another instrument (somewhat lyre-shaped) within the affectionate embrace of his left arm; while, with the same hand, he applies the *galoubet* to his lips, striking all the time upon the six-stringed* machine with a small stick which he

* Or four, I am not sure which.

holds in the right, and which produces a weak imperfect sound, inaudible at a small distance. This instrument is the ancient tambourin of Béarn, (the tambour de Basque, which we call tambourine, is not in use here,) and to its faint music the chairmen dance along in most monotonous measure; first following each other one by one, like a regular file of ducks, then turning round with a kind of deliberate whisk, and when solidly arranged, each couple face to face, cutting—what they probably call capers, with a weight of limb and a gravity of deportment in perfect consonance with the sad sameness of their music; while a few disengaged *balladins*, scattered about at intervals, rattle small flags over the heads of their more agile comrades.

This dance is the ancient *ballade* of Bigorre, and, as a national one, the least interesting I have ever seen. The spirited pantomime of the Roussillionais, the expressive bolero, swimming waltz, and clattering mazourka, all speak; so do many others,—the tarantella in Greek poetry, historical as the frescoes of Pompeii, the Highland reel in a pleasant mountain measure, fresh and heathy, and even the Irish jig, though less graceful and

dramatic than the dances of the south, and less buoyant than the merry ones of Scotland, has its own distinctive character; a quality in which the *ballade* is peculiarly deficient. But they are not without Irish qualities here, though they may not be dancing ones; the Bigorrais, like the Irish peasant, "se soult moult tristement;" yet I should not say "se soult," for he does not get drunk, he only *indulges* to mournful measure. Singing (as I have already remarked) is rarely heard; but when it does interrupt talk, it is the true *chro-naune* which the genuine Irish howl over their dead, or their beer-cups.

Perhaps the dance, of which I have spoken so lightly, may be of Greek or Phœnician origin; a Bacchic vestige, or a Phrygian mystery, full of classical affinities to an antiquarian, but Hebrew to a modern of my calibre. At all events, it helps to amuse the humbler classes of water-drinkers, who being separated from their habitual occupations, and having nothing to do but to stroll about and knit stockings, run out from all quarters if but a dog barks. I never saw a much idler population, all—not flying,—but sauntering away from themselves, and trying to lose the sense of their own

And yet idleness, the acknowle
mischief, does not seem to be fc
any of her brood. Even temptati
rogues; and the open door, freel
the ambulating traders who ply
Toulouse grisette to the capulet
with her distaff in her apron-string
bundle of worsteds for sale, leads
It would be vain to expect tha
simplicity of pastoral life, with its
of wants and wishes, should be fc
frequented watering-place, that r
within its bosom its full complem
and chaff which float upon the su
But if the peasant of Bigorre be n
and ungrasping (I mean the peas
bourhood of the baths) as before

(things of such common occurrence in rural communities,) or even of the slightest affray, since we have been in the country.

The peasants of the valley of Cauteretz are a quiet people, without any show whatever of gaiety, habitual or occasional, that I have seen. Spanish rather than French in the staidness of their deportment, but French in their love of talking,—such of them at least as are brought together here, and grow sociable. Remarkably less vivacious than their countrymen in general, (who it must however be said, though light of speech, are far more serious than we give them credit for being,) still talk is balm to them—here as elsewhere; and the constant stream of tongues, uninterrupted by other noises, runs on without ceasing while there is a streak of light in the heavens.

It is almost night now, and a poor pelican of the wilderness, who has been flapping his soiled wings for the amusement of the idle, retires to make room for an illuminated balloon, which at this moment is detached from the ground amidst the shouts and raptures of a crowd, who express their delight with southern enthusiasm, forgetting in the excitement of the moment their habitual tranquillity. It is a

pretty scene: the anxious gazers form a circle of many tier deep; the first row entirely composed of peasant children—chiefly girls—in their small scarlet capulets, like so many red riding-hoods, wondering at something pleasanter than a great wide-mouthed wolf; and the others of rainbow madrasses, subdued by the grave brown of the shepherd's bonnet. Apart from the close press are some ladies mounted on chairs, and here and there a good-humoured papa holding up his bantling at arm's length above the crowd; while all around are female faces full of anxious expectation, not thickset-heads over shoulders, as in a town show, but stretched out at intervals, one from a window, two from a balcony, a fourth tiptoe-ing on a curb-stone; while a group of three travesty the graces on a crockery-ware vendor's cart, whose merchandise still glistens on the pavement "à la triste lueur du suif."

In small places, curiosity seizes with eagerness on every casual recreation which presents itself, sifting the chaff of amusement, and not even disdaining the red-jacketed monkey, or the humours of the illustrious Punch. The balloon is a court-ball, a gala-opera—at least for the capulets, and a

pretty sight for all; it rises steadily and gracefully from the centre of the circle, hung with lights which, as it makes slow progress upwards, illuminate the group below; and full in view of its ascent comes the slower moon, just appearing above the brim of the horizon and casting its poetical gleam over the dark and silent hills, that seem to acquire increase of height and a finer character of loneliness as its sweet and solemn light falls upon them. But who cares about the moon? only myself, perhaps; all are too intent on the balloon to know whether she plays orb or crescent; all watch its upward progress with earnest and simple interest, and frequent and exulting shouts, and loud clapping of hands, and every possible demonstration of joy and wonder.

Perhaps it is their first balloon; at all events, Mongolfier's first ascension, when the spectators embraced each other and wept, and felt as if a path had been opened to the heavens, could hardly have been hailed with more enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONVERSATIONAL POWERS, AND THEIR MEN OFTEN GREAT TALKERS — FINE TIMES BAD WRITERS, AND WHY.

How the French can talk—that is, in the mind, (and they are always pleased with their company): nothi to them,—grave, gay, and the inte are all slipped into, and out of, with able facility. I once knew a person pretty girl, who possessed a very rem she would open a book, read the ta run over two or three lines in or three more in another, then throw next day, when it happened to be conversation, discuss its merits an only with what seemed an adequat

them of being particularly superficial talkers, but because they do talk so well and so readily on all subjects, however foreign to their tastes, habits, or occupations, however beyond (I speak now of the humbler classes) their apparent means of instruction, or removed from the ordinary contemplation of their minds, that one almost imagines them gifted with an instinct of speech. A Frenchman seldom makes his head a grave to bury thoughts in,* but a repository from which he sends them out ready winged. A visit which we received this morning, has set their conversational talents—forgotten since we left Paris—suddenly before us; and with it, their exquisite tact in detecting false pretensions in others. If politeness was ever sufficiently influential in France to induce clever people to tolerate prosing ones, it assuredly is not so now; the French are fearful sifters of false claims, and inflict more pain by the fine-pointed weapons of mockery and inattention, than others do by the broad-sword of hostility. Perhaps they may set too much value on colloquial talent, and we too little,—I do not mean as to the enjoyment

* "I make not therefore my head a grave, but a treasure of knowledge."—*Religio Medici.*

talkers are rarely persons of g
thinkers, or eminent writers, but
quent pulpit orators of whom we
course better than they print—a
ly; witness Burke, Johnson, Vc
Madame de Staël, and many ot
the living examples, bright ones
immediately called to mind.*

After all, great conversational
ceed from great fulness of mind;
constantly or suddenly except fr
source, ready to answer all dema
or scatter the riches of one's min
up, and even appropriated, by

* What voices have since gone down
ridge and Charles Lamb!—great spiri
less delightful as talkers for being s
whose rich and varied powers of
beautifully into action by the w

unless there be an inexhaustible vein at hand into which the spade may go "deeper and deeper still." A fine talker (I do not mean the daily reporters who fly about from house to house, like penny-postmen, dropping their bulletins) speaks from the exuberance of his ideas, and continually strikes out new ones as he is carried along by their force; and yet to this eminently endowed person we find the higher faculties of the mind often denied by prejudice, and merely (as it would seem) because he can afford to wear fine broad-cloth every day, having enough in his stores to renew the suit as the nap wears off.

It is true that there exist persons who can converse delightfully, and even originally, and yet who cannot put together twenty comprehensible lines; gifted persons, too, in their power of taking the ear and charming it. I once heard a foreign lady surprise, enthral, bewitch, by her rapidity of thought, and beautiful odd way (the way of her own, which so few people have,) of giving it utterance. "Why don't you write?" some one said; "you could make such a book, and that even of your every-day talk."—"I never could do any

thing with my pen," was the answer, and the exact truth. She wrote like a half-mad washerwoman.

In such cases, the want is not of mind, nor even of genius, but of the faculty of concentration, and the habit of arrangement. It is the power of squandering that makes the spendthrift: the same funds under more provident management would yield—not perhaps the rapid and seducing interest of immediate applause, but the constant and augmenting revenue of permanent approval. There are many who can afford to fling their flowers about full handed, not caring on whose heads they fall, and never missing them out of the heaps from which the chymist mind extracts its most precious essence; but who, loving their idle glow and scattered profusion, will not sit down to form them into wreaths, or search for a thread to bind them with.

And so ends digression and simile—and chapter with them.

CHAPTER XXII.

GORGE AND BASIN OF LUZ—LUZ TO BAREGES—BAREGES—ITS POPULATION AND ITS SPRINGS—ST. SAUVEUR—OPENING OF THE VALLEY OF GAVARNIE—THE BRIDGE OF SIA—GEDRO AND ITS GROTTO—BENEFIT OF IGNORANCE—VALLEY OF HEAS, AND ITS SHRINE—PILGRIMS AND PILGRIMAGES—THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS—HOW TO JUDGE OTHERS.

I RECOLLECT the time when I rather thought that Barèges was the whole Pyrenees. I had never heard much of any other place within their range, except perhaps Bagnères, over whose humbler pretensions the European reputation and sovereignty in gun-shot wounds of the former, gave it a most decided superiority. We are just returned from the grey ravine that holds this melancholy spot in its bosom to dine at Luz, which we intend to make our head-quarters for two or three days.

To get from Cauteretz to Barèges, Pierrefitte must of course be passed; it holds the keys of both valleys, which are separated by a lofty moun-

tain, and run in a parallel direction. The close gorge that leads to Luz is eminently picturesque: it opens gracefully, with a soft Italian colouring, and a grey bridge of one arch thrown over its babbling river; but soon narrows into a wooded defile of a wild and romantic character, lonely and deep, with that solemn colouring which belongs to a close rocky gully, a narrow horizon, and a turbulent torrent wrestling with silence, but not conquering its universal influence.

The road through this gorge is considered as an almost marvellous achievement, the difficulties which opposed its progress considered; it is an excellent road, and makes way for itself very ingeniously, sometimes clinging to the rocks at one side, then sliding down from them at another; now carried over the frequent bridge—always of the simple arch of grey stone,—then following the bend of the torrent, and finding just room enough between its bed and the perpendicular heights for an unobstructed passage. There is great tenderness of colouring, notwithstanding its iron-streaked rocks, and a certain poetry of loneliness about this scene that speak a language not unknown to the heart,—a musical language full of sweet notes and

gentle pauses, that talk to it of its old dreams, its gone-by, but ever-dear illusions, as the winter sunbeams do of the light of summer.

But presently the defile opens, widening gradually into a valley, and becomes perhaps more common-place—that is, Pyrenean common-place, which would be the fine-fine of other landscapes, and the basin of Luz offers its soft expanse to charm and surprise (as it never fails to do) by its gracious magic. Scarcely any spot in the whole Pyrenees is so praised, so Eden'd as this is; and for that very reason it was, perhaps, that I felt disappointed. It is a green basin, the surface gently diversified and watered by innumerable rills, pleasantly and beautifully surrounded,—grandly too, by mountains that gather hamlets on their cultivated sides, and overtop them with their boldly indented summits. It is very green, and very lovely,—fertile, fresh, and quiet; but hardly, I think, the downright paradise that it is called,—at least, after my old *Paradise Lost* notions. It has not the exquisite lawny uplands so beautifully frequent in the Pyrenees, nor are the trees so full and branching; but, on the contrary, too often (just now at least) stripped and sticky.

Rested our horses at Luz, the humble *chef lieu* of the valley. A very decent inn, (Cazeau's,) where we secured beds, ordered dinner, and looked out of a dull window. The show things of Luz are a church, old and fortress-like, with the traces of a small door by which alone the proscribed race of *cagots* were permitted to enter, and which is now blocked up; and a ruin, (a beautiful bit of colouring,) as old as the time of the Templars, called Le Château de Sainte Marie, once in possession of the English; and which, though invalided, still seems to guard the entrance of the valley of Bastan—the real valley of Barèges.

The road up this valley from Luz to Barèges is a continued ascent through a gorge of indifferent reputation in point of beauty, but very fresh, and green, and—I thought—sweet, at its opening, and indeed for a considerable way up. Ash, alder, poplar, and other river trees of light and open foliage, are gracefully clumped on the abrupt banks that close in the road to the right, and variegate the more barren sides of the opposite mountains, greatly helping to soften the angry aspect of the Gave. This same Gave is a wicked rover, that hubble-bubbles at a furious rate over

the huge blocks of granite which it has unearthed in its winter vagaries, and dragged along with it by main force. Wonderful gushing of clear water through the fissures in the rocks and the gulleys in the meadows, under the road and over the road; turned here by a slate and there by a stone, every petulant thread whirling its plaything of a mill, and then throwing itself into the Gave as if it were its mother's arms. On an ill-humoured day, all this may be as dreary as report makes it; but with this morning's sky of glory on it, it was charming. Trees scattered about every where,—not perhaps of the best kind, but still trees, and prettily cresting the hills with their light flexible branches, which are neither deficient in shade or freshness.

In short, all the desolation seemed to us to belong to the immediate rent in the rocks in which Barèges itself is placed. Yet even there, the heights to the left throw out from their furrowed flanks a green ledge beautifully undulated, swelling and sinking, and on every swell a cottage in its natural bower, forming a sequency of sweet and graceful miniatures. But the Gave and its connexions make angry winter work here, and their summer traces are no better than devastation. At

... of the waters
place itself is little more t
in a naked ravine, with ar
and a grave-yard at the ot
barren and undignified, clos
it a paradise, the sight of so
ed would overshadow it
soldiers lying along the benc
wan eyes, trying to warm
perhaps their last sunbeam,
trast to any gaiety afforded
the *Cercle*. Othello's tende
well to the "pride, pomp,
glorious war," may quicker
the after day! the sick wagg

Barèges seems not to have
the time when Madame de
her ailing pupil the Duke de

next summer's service. It must be good stone work to stand the torrents, and avalanches, and rock-rollings that make the desert echo in the dark months. Two or three pallid-looking officers lounged about, and two or three ringleted heads looked out at the windows,—a small gathering, though they say the place is crowded, and chiefly with English; but the ladies ride out in the morning, and the gentlemen, such at least as are in exercising condition, explore; and have the opportunity of doing so in a country of beauty and romance, which we are told exists within a very short distance of this lifeless region. A trivial circumstance adds a shade to the gloom of Barèges: the dress of the peasant women is oftenest black, and the fashion of binding their slatternly mob-caps round their heads with a broad ribbon of the same funereal hue, gives them a dismal air. The bath chairs, too, look like hospital-sedans for cholera patients,—close box, colour grey, and loop-hole windows.

But if these springs in the desert do really perform the wonders ascribed to them; if they indeed bring healing to those who have been cast out from other sources of health and helps to life, as too

far gone even for hope; then indeed are their waters blessed, and even their barren landscape made beautiful to the feeble who have found strength in its rugged bosom, after having sought for it in vain amidst the glow and perfume of a more inviting nature.

The descent from Barèges to Luz we thought very striking; all mountain descents are so, more or less. The trees which seem to cling to the hills in ascending, are thrown out from them, and the folds of the hills stand apart from each other in different degrees of light. It is true that in going up, the great heights are generally in view, giving shade and grandeur to the distance, and that often in returning we leave the loftiest attributes of majesty behind; but here the descent is against the dark screen that rises out of the plains of Luz. Going up, the meagre, pale perspective is before us; coming down, the grand and dark one,—and so lighted up to-day! such excessive beauty in the heavens, and let down from thence upon the earth, that common things look like effects of magic.

The baths of St. Sauveur (a very short walk from Luz) are much frequented; by some they

are considered as a necessary preparation for the more powerful ones of Barèges, and used by others as a kind of weaning process after them. The village is exquisitely placed just at the opening of the gorge that leads to Gavarnie. It consists of a single street of handsome houses, with as much marble displayed upon their outsides as can be managed in a plain way. These houses are disposed along the ledge of a green mountain, with a wild look down upon the clear and rapid Gave of Gavarnie, as it hurries along through rocky and abrupt banks richly tufted. Soft lawns and branching trees overlook its courses; and baths, with a marble peristyle and an air of oriental luxury, rise above it. More beautiful than Cauteretz, more beautiful indeed than any thing that I know of in its way, but not so cheerful.

Slept at Luz, and were up with the birds: all in movement at five o'clock in spite of a thick fog on the hill tops—a bad omen, our guide thought; but we despised it, and took the road a little after six for the valley of Gavarnie. Some people on hearing any thing indiscreetly praised, feel piqued into opposition; this was certainly not our case, for we set off prepared to think box myrtle, and marsh-

mallows rose-geranium; in short, to believe in the religion of the place without examining its thirty-nine articles.

The opening is rich and romantic. This prepossessing preface is rather a distinctive feature in the Pyrenean valleys; the first leaf leads you graciously into the heart of the volume, and St. Sauveur, which rises up on the bank of the Gave, forms the beautiful decoration of the title-page. My chairmen, whose good nature equalled their agility, would point out every thing that had a name attached to it, and made me remark a spot called Le Pas de l'Echelle, where a band of Miquilites had passed over the hollow of the valley from one mountain to another by the help of a ladder; a mere ladder, they added, and with such an air of straight-forward unimaginative belief, that if the thing had not been impossible, I should have taken it for granted on the testimony of their working-day faces. We asked when this *pas de Zéphyr* had been performed? "Avant la révolution," was the answer. They did not name the revolution of '89, or the revolution of '30; but calling all broils by the same general name, left us the choice of any that had taken place from Pharamond to

Louis Philippe. Not far from the Pas de l'Echelle is the Peyrou Ardoune, or Pierre Ronde, from whose summit the *Brouches*, (the worse than Benshees of the valley) curse and prophesy. Many valleys have their peaks of good or evil reputation: in that of Héas, the Virgin spoke from the top of a rock; her image did the same from the mountain of Bétharam; and the Yona Gorri (flame-coloured spirit) of the valley of Aspe, sends thunder and tempests from the heights of Anïe.

The mist continued to lower as we passed through a hollow gorge, with a naked torrent foaming below; but just as we issued from it, the sun broke through the clouds and lighted up the opening, and at the same moment three figures came round a point of rock into the very spot where its beams fell. They were Spanish peasants, in their summer vests of light blue, crimson sashes, and bright handkerchiefs tied round the heads, cone-form, but flattened a little at the top. Splendid figures all, but one who wore his blanket-cloak upon his shoulders was really magnificent; a robber-chief in look,—not the scowling villain of Itri or Fondi, in whose degraded visage the fierce spirit

of aggression has sunk into the more sordid one of speculating cruelty, but the robber whom young ladies read, perhaps dream, of; who wears a feather in his beaver, and has an eye under in it —such an eye! bold, yet tender; and then the heart, 'more sinned against than sinning,' and the grand mind, mistaken by man and driven by his vulgar inventions to the forest and its lawless, charming, point-of-honour, intelligence-with-heaven etc. etc. life.

This is the young lady's robber, or was so before certain stories of ear-splitting and other *tendresses* were as generally known as recent travellers have made them. Our Spaniard would have played the part grandly, or higher ones; he would have looked Don Gutierre,* or Don Lopez d'Almeyda,† or any other of the terrible heroes of Calderone to the life, no quarter for erring ladies, or suspected ones; yet, though capable of wrath, still the finest specimen that has come in our way of the ultra-magnificents whom one some-

* *El Medico de su Honra*, (the Physician of his own Honour).

† *A secreto Agravio, secreta Vengansa*, (To secret Outrage, secret Vengeance.)

times meets with in the mountains, and who contrasted with the grievous-looking faces that hang out at Cauteretz, make one fancy that there can be no medium figures among the Spanish peasants. Those whom we have seen are either conspicuous for personal beauty and elevation of mien, or short, squalid, and ill-featured. I have scarcely remarked what we should call a well-looking man amongst them: all who are not splendid, are hideous, though amazingly picturesque.

The bridge of Sia is (I believe) the first authorized point of admiration in the valley; it is a very sweet pause, and the look from the bridge, and from a point a little above it, is at once soft and spirited. Morning brightening gradually from dirty-water clouds into pinkish streaking; four little mills slide down alongside of the narrow fall that, dividing its stream, tumbles over the rocks in two frothy stripes, looking at a distance like two white ribbons; just sun enough now to make the dew glisten on their brown thatch, and warm up their watery aspects a little. The mills are before Sia; at it, the Gave seems to have taken head, and rushing down through a bold rocky

chasm overhung with wood,* shoots under a double-bridge,—a new arch thrown over an old ivied one, with considerable effect.

After Sia, the gorge becomes again sterile. Passed under the shadow of the Pic de Bergoz, and onwards along the base of schistus mountains, bare, or covered with a thick coating of box, nut, and other brush-wood. Always the sea-green torrent below us, sometimes a wooden bridge (a thing I love, it so becomes goats and goatherds, capulets and capuchons,) crossing it; and at the issue of the defile the pleasant hamlet, meadows, walnut-trees, and lindens of Pragnères. From Pragnères the valley widens, the thatched grange on the glossy lawn becomes more frequent; smooth meadows glisten on the river's brink, or rise up from it gracefully, and the waters, dividing into branches, circle round a wooded islet or a soft savannah. Glaciers sternly shutting in the distance, and the Brêche de Roland capped with snow and glittering in the sunbeams.

Our first halt was at the village of Gedro, (or

* All this beautiful wood has been since cut down,—to show off the water, (*faire valoir l'eau,*) as our guide said: when we last saw it, not a branch left.

Gedres,) pleasantly situated on the soft lap of one of those openings here called basins, where mountains, that in their near community have formed the barriers of the gorge, open their wide screens, and extending them round a broad spread of pasture or of meadow, make room for cottages to group themselves into hamlets on its teeming surface; or, in a more melancholy mood, link their bare arms round some solitary spot, and consign it to abandonment and silence.

From the public-house in the village of Gedro, or rather from its garden, a flight of steps leads down to a grotto (as it is called) of peculiar beauty. A natural cup in a rocky hollow receives a fairy fall,—full, pure, and shaded by the meeting branches which form its infoliated roof. Having filled to overflowing this delicious fountain, the stream gushes by with beautiful impetuousness, and is soon lost sight of between two rocky ledges. It is a bath close and consecrated as Titania's bower, and one looks into it almost expecting to see the white feet of Diana shining through the water. I think she must have bathed here on some sultry day, when the hot chase had sent her panting to its brink with those human feelings of heat and

lassitude to which goddesses, in common with mere mortals, appear to have been liable; while her nymphs, not finding room enough to splash about, talked scandal on the rocks, or played at hide-and-seek among the bushes.

How lucky that Louis Quatorze never chanced to see, or perhaps hear of it! He would have planned its transfer to Versailles, as he did that of the Maison Carrée; or (that not being among the possibilities) have had it travestied at the end of some cropped alley, straight as a bow-string, with his royal self in white marble personifying Phœbus cooling his chariot-wheels in the fountain, while La Montespan and her attendant nymphs scattered rose-leaves on its surface. But kingly caprices apart, what a delicious thing it would be to hang up in the corner of a park, like a picture of Domenichino's, only so much fresher as nature itself is fresher than art. If we had it in one of our show wildernesses, how the annuals would combine to line and lithograph it into celebrity and out of the sweet grace of privacy, and the charm that belongs to a surprise.

I am quite sure that one of the principal reasons why the Pyrenees, when first visited, never fail to

create delight, and to more than justify expectation, is because their beauties are brought for the first time before the eye with the auricula meal still upon their velvet leaves. Passed by, or unthought of, by ambulating artists or sketching amateurs, no gaudy landscape or feeble lithograph has made us just enough acquainted with their forms and their people to deprive them of the gloss and charm of novelty; we seem to have ourselves found out their treasures, and march into the midst of them exultingly, as if we had a right to hoist a flag of discovery on every hill and in every valley. It is all unknown land to the many, and a thousand times the more lovely for being so. No one familiar with Canaletti finds any thing new in the aspect of Venice, and yet nothing else resembles it: and who is there that does not experience, on first entering Switzerland, the drawback made on the full flush of admiration by the Staubachs, and the Giesbachs, and the costumes of Berne, Zurich, or Lucerne, with which they have become intimate in coloured prints?

The valley of Héas opens at Gedro: its chapel and its pilgrimage have given it a Pyrenean celebrity. On the day of the Assumption, the joyous

and the idle, as well as the devout, flock from far and near to the shrine of Our Lady of the Desert, and there, in a stern and rocky solitude, with wild mountains, a dark lake, and the desolation of granite about them, pray in an agony of devotion, embrace the miraculous image of the Virgin,—a peasant virgin (as we are told) in a russet gown and red capulet,—groan out their prayers, chaunt their litanies, grovel, and beat their breasts in intense humiliation; and then, retiring to some convivial corner, feast, romp, quarrel, are jovial, tender, riotous, till another fit of devotion sends them back to the chapel to spread out their contrition at the foot of the altar, and resume the canticle which they had so recently exchanged for songs of love and revelry. The night is an orgie: nothing but the testimony of writers interested by their feelings, and disposed by their justifiable prejudices to give a favourable colouring to every thing that affects national manners, could make such things believed.

But Héas, like Bétharam, may have grown discreet; still I am afraid that pilgrimages—I love the word, it is so full of old, and pious, and beautiful associations—are not so holy in their intents

and purposes as they would seem to be,—indeed that their demoralizing influence cannot be doubted; still there arrive in the holy week at Rome (I have often seen them) pilgrims, whose wayworn countenances testify to the hardships endured in their long and painful journey from the dear land, the far-off home, which they have left behind to go and pray in the sanctuary of the stranger. These poor people feel, I have no doubt, as if led on by an inward spirit of revelation—their star of Bethlehem, which makes their path clear, and stands over the spot where they have come to worship.

I recollect a poor woman, who once sat with me on the grass outside the walls of the monastery of Valambrosa; her husband had gone to pray in the chapel, and mine to visit the monastery whose churlish inmates interdict the approach of every thing that wears the female shape. They were pilgrims, both the man and his wife,—under the vows (as she told me); and were returning from Rome, where they had been to fulfil one made in the hour of sickness, and enjoined by the blessed Virgin herself, who had come three times to the bedside of the man when he was shrived for death,

and promised with her own heavenly voice, the woman said, to restore him again to health, on the condition that he should go on foot to the shrine of St. Peter at Rome, and there perform certain acts of penitence and prayer indicated by the celestial visitor.

The poor man made the vow, got better, and setting out with his wife from their village in Loraine, went his way, as he believed himself bidden to do, without chart or compass to the holy shrine. Strangers to the language, or to the value of a single coin current in the country through which they had to pass, often bewildered amidst cross-roads, sometimes benighted and obliged to retrace their steps in darkness, jeered at by one, relieved by another; walking painfully and with blistered and excoriated feet, they at length arrived, after a bitter pilgrimage of many hundred miles, at the gates of the Holy City, where they at once found friends. The man was taken care of in an asylum where male pilgrims are received, lodged, and, if ill, nursed with tenderness; and the woman found in the convent of the Holy Trinity, all that the charity of the heart beautifully exercised could suggest. Great prin-

cesses and noble ladies (as she told me) knelt upon the ground and washed her feet, all dusty and blistered as they were from the road; served her at supper, made her bed with their own hands, and waited on her for three whole days. At the end of which time, being refreshed and strengthened, the great ladies who (she added) were not nuns, but noble dames in silks and velvets, kissed her as if she had been their own sister, and their dear one; and, giving her money to help her on her homeward journey, sent her to rejoin her husband, who had been treated during his three days of repose with similar kindness

"Better had they both staid at home," says one.

"And minded their household cares, and their children, if they had any," adds another.

Granted. Yet still there is something exceedingly tender and touching in the devotion of these poor people; believing as they did (and in judging we should always place ourselves in the position of those whom we take upon us to judge) this act, which in others might be induced by idle and—as hindering the power of usefulness—culpable superstition, becomes one of humble and sincere thanksgiving. Theirs was the real pilgrim's progress;

not going after idleness or leasing, but fulfilling humbly and by suffering what they believed to be a divine injunction; and having done so, returning homewards full of faith and thankfulness,—not murmuring at what they had endured, not priding themselves on what they had performed, but rejoicing "with exceeding great joy" that they should have been sent (as they devoutly believed) to "burn incense in the temple."

The jolly pilgrim of Héas takes another view of the subject, and instead of keeping off that gamesome mad-cap jubilee with his staff, trots her along under his arm.

CHAPTER XXIII.

APOLOGY FOR MY DONKEY—VALLEY OF GAVARNIE, CONTINUED—THE CHAOS—TOO MUCH LIGHT—AN EAGLE WANTING—CIRCUS OF THE MARBORE, AND THE WONDERS OF ITS AMPHITHEATRE—OUR WORLD AND THE WORLD OF NATURE—MAGIC AND MYSTERY—NO SPAIN—THE CURATE OF GAVARNIE—MORE SPANIARDS—FANCIFUL IMAGININGS—SKULLS OF THE TEMPLARS—THE POOR MAN'S PRAYER—THE HAMLET AT THE CLOSE OF EVENING—THE IDIOT BOY—A MOUNTAIN BALLAD—THE MINSTREL—THE FAIRY AND THE CAGOTS—DARKNESS GATHERING—RETURN AT NIGHTFALL—CHAIRMEN, ACCOMPLISHED AND OTHERWISE.

I BEGIN to fear that my Pegasus is rather a long-eared one, with the bad habit belonging to his fraternity of stopping at every hedge, and browsing on every stray herb, thorn, thistle, downy dandelion, or bitter wormwood,—no matter what, that happens to fall in its way. If I were to die for it I cannot get him straight on through the valley of Gavarnie; so here we are still at Gedro, just come up from the beautiful fountain, and looking in through the kitchen door at a pan-full of trout

frying in a cloud of fragrance, that as we inhale its savoury steam, makes us as hungry as ravens. The mess of millet smokes near it on a dish as large as Herodia's charger, (sign-post dimensions,) and the set-out being particularly neat, makes us rather regret that we have not time to stop and enter into particulars. I always think—a vulgar thought, perhaps, that a cottage *inn*—I was going to say, but I believe it is better not to mince matters, and frankly write *ale-house*, is sometimes a delightful thing; but it must be an English one. "An honest ale-house, (as the kind old man Izaak Walton says,) where you will always find a clean room, lavender in the windows, and twenty ballads stuck about the walls." What a sweet homely English picture! as old as King James, (first of the name,) and as fresh as spring daisies. I, who am certainly no trout-fisher, almost feel myself within sight of it, watching the line playing on the surface of the clear pebbly stream, and the old tree, with its knotty roots in the water, making cool shade and certain shelter for the quiet angler.

My chairmen, evidently lovers of the marvellous, pointed out as we went along La Brêche de Roland, as a gap three hundred feet high in the

mountain curtain of the Marboré is called. It was made (as they assure us) by one blow of the Paladin's sword; who, after this gentle exercise, refreshed himself with a flying leap of a couple of leagues (the guide called it) as the crow flies, landing pleasantly on a rock, which still bears the impression of his horse's hoofs. I asked our guide if he believed the legend; he said that he did and he did not, which I rather take to be the aggregate amount of faith in such matters. Another, seeing that I made a note, said, "This is the mark of Monsieur Roland's horse: my great uncle knew it to be true, and so do many others who are still alive." I smothered my doubts, and spoke of the Preux *à l'Ariosto*, which seemed to please them; but the blow and the leap apart, they had heard nothing of his story. Angelica might have been abbess of Fontevrault, or queen of Cyprus, for any thing they knew about her; but each would probably have been ready to swear, if put to it, that Monsieur Roland was gossip, if not cousin, to his grandfather. The breach being three hundred feet high, honest measure, sounds like something prodigious, but at a distance it is a mere gap: however, it was no bad blow; the blade must

have been true Damascus, to say nothing of the arm:—and then the leap! enough to make Nimrod Osbaldiston die of envy.

After the pleasant pastures and sweet waters of Gedro the gorge blackens, and we move on amidst crumbling rocks, scenting box and noting torrents, till we find ourselves involved in the stony mazes of the Chaos,—the desert where the free bird has entire possession. This Chaos, as it is called, though the country name is Peyrada, is a savage and singular pass, heaped with gigantic fragments of rock, which encumber the earth and block in the eye by their prodigious masses; each recalling what travellers tell us of the rocking-stone of Sinai, but perhaps owing a portion of their fearful gauntness to the verdurous beauty which precedes it. "Grand Dieu!" exclaimed one of my porters, a heavy-looking peasant, as we entered it, "voilà ton monde primitif, avant que tu ne l'aies arrangé à ton gré." He had been a hunter of bears in his youth, but was now content to bring down the eagle, and grow familiar in the solitudes of the desert with those objects to which the untaught mind offers its instinctive worship.

No tradition, I believe, exists of the remote con-

vulsion of nature to which this gorge owes its extraordinary appearance; one might imagine it a battle-field, where the antagonists were giants, and the missiles rocks torn up from their moorings in the earth, and hurled with superhuman force or fury, as the prodigious arm willed it. There is too much sunshine upon it now, more than enough to light it up into a jumble; twilight would throw it into masses, it would be more shadowy, more awfully fantastic; or the breaking morning, with its mysterious and slowly developed light, its wan light that is just not darkness, making phantoms of its forms, would endue them with that vague character, whose unmeasured power rarely endures the test of absolute exposure.

But in or out of sunshine, the effect of this extraordinary pass is most striking, and would be still more so, did it lead at once to the great fall and its sublime amphitheatre. But a gentle vale intervenes,* creating a summer feeling, which

* This is the valley of Gavarnie *proper;* but to avoid confusion, I have given the name generally to the whole vale, from Luz to the Cirque de Marboré. In the map of the country it has many divisions and various names, all of which I have fused into the general name of Gavarnie.

somewhat dilutes the impression left on the mind by its chaotic rocks; an impression that would link itself well with the gloom and mystery of the Marboré. A poor dingy little bird with a feeble whistle was the only sign of life in the Chaos, and that weak evidence hid itself amongst the rents in the rocks, as if it belonged more to the earth than the air. An eagle would have been fine and appropriate; or the stormy petrel, whose name is a picture, with the angry heavens, and the roaring waves, and the desolate rocks that make the mariner's heart quail, in it. But his solitude is on the ocean, and the eagle had deserted his home; so neither came, though invoked.

At length, after a pilgrimage of nearly six hours, and a halt of a few minutes at the little inn of Gavarnie, we approach the arena through an oval basin framed in by grey rocks partially greened, with an underwood of beech and some scattered pines, and divided from the actual hollow of the amphitheatre by the long folds that stretch out from the side mountains, and crossing over each other, conceal the base of the Marboré. As we descend into this first circus, the amphitheatre

presents itself splendidly; the upper towers of the Marboré lighted up with a cold silver light upon the snow that is quite magical, while the lower ramparts repose in deep and stationary shadow. And here the eye brings itself to a central point, from which the arms of the half-circle diverge, taking the form of a blunted crescent, breaking down abruptly at each extremity. This view (advancing towards the circus) is magnificent in form, character, and colouring; within the great hollow is the fall of Gavarnie, the throned idol. I have worshipped nobler ones,—but the shrine! what glory in the wilderness!

The cascade itself recalls the Staubach, another fine fall (in a minor way) that I never could greatly admire, though Lord Byron has associated its image with the sublime one of *Death on the pale horse.* It descends from an elevation of 1250 feet, and is supposed to be the highest in Europe, but of this the eye can form no estimate; it uses the surrounding objects as its standard, and decides by their comparative magnitude. The Staubach, whose tail is only 800 feet long, makes nearly as flourishing a figure as this comet of the desert,

which, though a splendid downward rush of water, broken twice in its fall by the projecting rocks, has no wild ungovernable bursts, no magnificent overbearings; it drops down from the middle of the rocks, instead of coming, like the Handeck, straight from the heavens; the rocks rise up behind and mark its issue, which would be more striking if less obvious.

Besides these defects, it has others; it is visible too long before it is actually reached, and instead of being a front, is a side-scene decoration. If it were in the centre of the solemn and majestic amphitheatre, it would have more breadth and boldness, it would take the lead instead of being an accessory; but placed as it is, I must say that it appears to me not altogether worthy of the amazing magnificence with which nature in her plenitude of means has surrounded it.

The circus of the Marboré within which it hangs—not reigns, is indeed grand; its magnificent arena seems formed to receive the boiling flood of an American cataract. A mighty amphitheatre of giant rocks rises up in graduated ramparts; other rocks spread out from these, stretching their

branching arms round a dark basin, once a lake; but the continued workings of the water having in the course of ages worn itself a passage through these natural barriers, it is now dry. Others again, assuming the forms of architecture, lift up their castellated walls, which from their resemblance to the works of man are called the towers of Marboré, bearing on their mighty shoulders the weight of long-accumulated snows and eternal glaciers. At this moment I can recollect nothing that, as a single image, can be compared with this, nothing that approaches its character of grand and grizzly loneliness: it is a Bible desert, and desolate—but not a desolation; for there are no traces of the overthrow of man's works, no marks of the passage of life and its extinction, no sign that any son of man had passed hereby. The remarkable form of the arena, its depth, and (at this moment) darkness; its loftiness and magnitude depending upon nothing, owing nothing to previous associations, being as it were alone with heaven,—grand, silent, companionless,—presents an image of amazing power to the mind. With a little help of fancy, one might believe it a spot hollowed out of the wilderness for

mountain. Yet the blue iris and otl
flowers blow within its dreary circu
sometimes buds amidst the ruins of the

*Il fiore del pellegrino**—the beau
thistle of the Lucca hills, is here too,
pure star in the desert; nor has the c
bourhood of the glaciers hindered the
and darker pine from mixing with the
ochrous banding of the detached side-s
behind which suddenly, and at this mon
the sun, throwing its light on the oppo
the amphitheatre, whose broad rocks g
the moisture of innumerable threads of
trickle over it, making its smooth
like marble, polished almost to glassin
rocky points to the left, fine-drawn and

How the world—I mean the little world of our own contrivance — would seem poor and trivial near to this prodigious world of nature. Fill the deep, and vast, and dark arena with equipages; crowd it with orders of the Garter—or the Bath, the Golden Fleece, or the Golden Eagle; sprinkle it with diamonds; make a way amidst its snows for kings and their regalia; fill the air with courtly music, load it with costly perfume,—how less than littleness it would all seem! Such scenes are worth volumes of instruction; they open to us an upward path, and elevate the faculty of admiration, with which all sentient beings are more or less endued, to the level of legitimate worship.

Blessed and beautiful nature! how fair you are to those who know and honour you, and to whom the fibres of the wild leaf, and the chirping of the little bird, and the gloss of the small berry, seem full of loveliness; but here in this solitude, where the voice of the falling waters utters parables, and the echoes of the desert prophesy,—how holy, how full of mighty images,—images of the early world, when angels were sometimes sent to communicate with man; of the wanderings of the great tribe

... their fathers. It
of the forest, of the mountain, of t
plain, that the soul feels the infl
objects—such as connect themse
ones—in its strength; it is there t
place of life loses its hold, and t
lined by contemplation, becomes 1

We did not venture on the Pont
accumulation of snow under whicl
the cascade pass is called: the incr
of the atmosphere warned us off
gone so far, so we took 'base couns
and turned back. And now we are
on the hollow circus of the Marbor
that fronts its opening. A shadow
face of the fall, and partially dark

Has not even he apostrophized as "vain" the

"Aspirations of an earnest will?"

ingratitude, perhaps, in one whose will is power; but a lesson to be taken in wise part by others.

While my chairmen repose, and I still look upon the magic and the mystery before me, the sound of sheep-bells and the call of a shepherd come down from the high mountain pastures of the Malhada de Serades. We are only two hours' walk from Spain, our guide says,—two hours' walk! But alas! two hours is the same thing to me as two hundred; and so, with my head almost through the aperture, I must even draw it in again, and, like the renowned Don Quixote, cheat my fancy with a flock of sheep.

The great road, too, is blocked up: no entering without a quarantine of fifteen days, and in a lazaretto; which might be paying too much for one's whistle, considering the short time we should have to blow through it. Farewell, then, Spain! I shall perhaps never be so near to you again. They tell me you are stern, and bleak, and desolate, with scorched plains and eternal sand-hills; that your briars are without birds, and your fields without

to the tinkling guitar, and
the castanet, and hear the merr
as the caravan files down t
and think of jealous Madrid,
stately Cordova, and of all that
and history (scarcely less roman
as I used to do before I came ne
the claims, so long acknowledge
tion, coldly disputed.

Returned to the hamlet of G
chair carried backwards, and
towards the Marboré; by which
a view of its glories for nearly
taking in the whole of the hollow
extreme of the crescent to the othe

swift streams, and where the curate sits reading in the shadow of a rock, but with a better breviary open before him than his written one. An angel, the mistress of the inn calls him,—wise, mild, learned, and, she might have added, resigned; for it requires the courage of piety to wear out with cheerfulness a young existence in this lonely hamlet, which, during the seven or eight months of its long winter is almost buried in snow, and not a human being to speak to but the few poor peasants who remain in it; no commerce with the responding mind, no companionship of thought; nature sealed up, and the short hours of daylight bleak and clouded.

Nothing but the consciousness of a great duty, and the power of alleviating by counsel and by comfort,—but above all by the lesson of devout hope, the hardships of the small flock of whom he is in the most beautiful sense of the word the pastor, could make such a situation acceptable to a young and (as he is described) educated man. An intense conviction, the heart-whole earnestness and simplicity of an apostle, and an humble confidence in divine support belong, no doubt, to one who

thus devotes himself to the labours of holiness,—labours too of love, love which finds its requital even here, in the warm affection of the poor dwellers by the winter river and the cold mountains of Gavarnie.

But, after all, it is a beautiful and edifying life; full of usefulness, privileged in good. Who can say, when their wanderings have led them to the remote cabin of the Christian priest, that "there is no longer perfume in the temple, or music in the sanctuary, or emotion in the heart!"

The little inn at Gavarnie afforded us trout and an omelet, to which we added the contents of a wallet presciently stored at Luz. It affords beds, too, but they are not tempting ones. As we arrived at the door, three Spaniards were sitting on a bench before it; they seemed placed there expressly as if to confirm my previous notion of extremes; such prodigies of ugliness! but picturesque in their rags of blue, white, and scarlet, as Octavian in his calculated tatters. I do not know how these people contrive it, but they always seem as if arranged to serve a painter for his models,—ugly, lean, short, dirty, old,—no matter what, the pic-

turesque is always uppermost. There is now an ancient couple to be seen every evening slowly crossing the little place of Cauteretz, two poor persons humbly clad in rusty mourning, low in stature, withered in aspect, and of quiet and unobtrusive mien; yet I defy any one to pass them by without a feeling of curiosity amounting almost to interest. The woman's black veil is not so foreign to the eye,—because it is a common wear in many other countries,—as the capulet, which is peculiar to the Pyrenees; but it produces a totally different effect on the mind, and I cannot, as I see her walk along slowly, help thinking of that Catalina d'Acosta of whom Calderone speaks as of one who had bartered her soul for the possession of certain infernal secrets; or look at the little old man in his worn-out sombrero, without fancying him at least an astrologer, if not a dabbler in other arts and blacker ones. I read (and cannot help it) midnight sins and secrets in their poor old eyes, and think what guilt and mystery a skilful painter would make out of them—good Catholics and harmless creatures, as I have no doubt they are.

... the Confessor,—whe
Order was annihilated by the
of Philippe le Bel. It is

" A beggarly account of e
which would sorely puzzle a
is no warrant for their authe
but tradition; for ages they ha
the uniformity of the grave, w
allows no individual trick of
When we entered the church, t
down, each uttering a few words
self devoutly. This act of rever
because it seemed sincere; w
slurred over as a tax, is by the p
a help. If " prayer can detain
leaves a blessing," as a wise an
thought

bridge over the torrent, which the morning sun had effaced. A little later, and it would seem like a Memphis in the desert; but now, though the sun speeds westward, and has already dropped behind the side mountains, leaving the valley in deep shadow, yet we know and feel that it is there, and the partial dimness, though favourable to mystery, is still too revealing for illusion.

Another proof of the benefit of shadows: to-day we almost passed by (in ascending from Gedro) the fall of the Pré de Saousa; and now, going back, we are half in love with it as it bounds with a charming, laughing run through declivitous meadows, and, taking a wild leap into the wooded ravine below, rushes on joyfully. Evening descent on Gedro exceedingly sweet: the shadows fall on the hamlet, and on the deep green hills that stretch out their thin detached screen in a fine prolonged line; while behind, a wide interval flooded with light separates them from the higher and still radiant summits of the more distant mountains. A blue smoke curls up from the roof of every cottage: few images of peace equal that which a remote hamlet offers to the mind at close of evening, when the pleasant token of in-door comfort

or quiet, which the barking of t
the humming voices of the little
aids than weakens. There are ce
of life which seem to me to help
solitude, even of loneliness; such
the wood-cutter's axe in the hollo
the small spot cleared by man's la
derness; the felled pines and sawi
brink of the remote torrent; and the
that live, far away from all others,
shelter of the hut that clings to t
ment or awaken the consciousness
from the world; that single point o
by its gleam the vastness of the d
rounds it; its utter loneliness had
but we find man there, and the feeli

had a long, tarnished visage, with a cunning folly in the eye, and a dreary laugh! Tears are gay things compared with the laugh of an idiot,—the loud, confident laugh, that contrasts so mournfully with the utter helplessness of the poor creature who utters it. As we trot along, my porters sing Despourrin's ballads: one has a fine voice, and none are so absolutely tuneless as to harden the patois out of its pleasant sound. I adore the feeling in which Charlemagne, when he saw a new language effacing the one that he loved, ordained that all the ballads in the old tongue, to him the native one—the language of his race,—should be gathered together and preserved. Indeed, so much do I love all that keeps up the love of home, and of the old times and the simple ones, that though I do not understand the patois of these mountains, yet its sound always delights my ear,—morally speaking, as well as musically.

The favourite ballad of Despourrins, is *The Forsaken Shepherd.* Here is the original patois, and the literal—word for word—translation, with which a friend, conversant in the language of the mountains, has kindly favoured me.

Cò leouyé, cò boulatye dizé l' infourtu
La tendresse et l'amou que you t'èy da
Soun acco lous rebuts qu'èy meritat ?

Despuch t'es accoustade dab y en de co
As prés u ta haout bol, que ma maysou
N'ey prou haoute enta tu d'u cabirou.

Tas oüilles dab las mies nous' dégnen p
Touns superbs moutous despuch ença
Nou s'approuchon d'eous miés qu'ent'a

Las richesses d'ou mounde nou h'en que
E lou plus bet segnou dab soun aryen
Nou baou bas u pastou qui biou counten

De richesses me passi d'aünous, de quali
You non souy qu' û pastou ma non n'y a
Qui n'ous surpassi touts en amistat.

Encouère que you siey praoube dens mou
Aymi mey moun berret tout espelat,
Que nou pas lou plus bet chapeou bourd

Adiou, cò de tigresse

LE BERGER MALHEUREUX.

Lá haut sur la montagne un berger malheureux,
Assis au pied d'un hêtre, noyé de pleurs,
Songeait au changement de ses amours.

Cœur leger, cœur volage—disait l'infortuné,
La tendresse et l'amour que t'ai porté
Sont-ce les rebuts que j'ai mérités ?

Depuis que tu fréquentes la gent de condition,
Bien tu as pris un si haut vol, que ma maison
N'est assez haute pour toi d'un chevron.

Tes brébis avec les miennes ne se daignent plus mêler,
Ses superbes béliers depuis cela
Ne s'approchent des miens que pour les frapper du front.

Les richesses du monde ne font que donner tourment,
Et le plus beau seigneur avec son argent
Ne vaut pas un pasteur qui vit content.

De richesses je me passe, d'honneur, de qualité,
Je ne suis qu'un pasteur, mais il n'y a personne
Que je ne les surpasse tous en amitié.

Encore quoique je sois pauvre dans mon petit état,
J'aime mieux mon berret tout pelé
Que non pas le plus beau chapeau bordé.

Adieu, cœur de tigresse ! bergère sans amour
Changez, bien tu peux changer de serviteur,
Jamais n'en trouveras un tel que moi.

disguising himself like a shep
flock, and leading it up into
lived there in solitude, " tout Pa
était," composing his romaunts
better times. The " Pair de F
stick in the conscience of the ol
dently had his doubts as to the
title, but the orator beat him down
then improvisé'd a prose translatio
ballads for me in a running way, h
in the midst of it to a fisherma
basketing a trout as we passed,
the seriousness of his profession t
round, but made no response.
chaunter told me the story of the
the Ladu of th

heard) could never draw water from brook or well without spilling three parts of it, so their houses were unclean, and themselves thirsty. Why the men did not help them, my informer cannot tell, being but little versed in the history of this unfortunate race, who had been altogether forgotten, he says, until the English took to inquiring about them; adding, that they were now extinct, so it was no matter what they had been.

A fine tone of solemnity in the deep valleys half an hour before absolute night, when there are no shadows, but a deep and universal tint spread over the face of nature. Darkness gathering, not from one settled point, but coming as age does on the human face, imperceptibly yet palpably. Trees growing indistinct, and taking fantastic shapes, houses looking like rocks, rocks like castles; but as we come up into the last light of the western sky—the tender gauzy lilac, how beautiful it is! and the stars that tremble through it, coming out one by one until the firmament is studded over, and then the pale, pale lilac, growing paler, and melting into the true star-light blue,—the blue of heaven!

made prisoners at the attack on Narbonne in 1018, not possessing the faculty of speech, barked like dogs.

There was something like a small spire that rose threadily above the dark landscape. I asked my guide what it was, and thought he answered that it *had* been a church: so I said, "And what is it now?" "Why a church, to be sure; what else could be made of it." I once read in some old book, of a bad Count de Mâcon, who had an ugly way of laying his hands on all consecrated property, and to whom, as he sat one night, Don Juan-like, in his castle, carousing with a company of young knights and nobles, there appeared the colossal figure of a man all black, mounted on a steed as black as the rider. The uninvited visitor entered the hall *toujours chevauchant*; and commanding the master of the feast to mount another horse which stood ready at the gate, seized its reins, and galloped *upwards* (odd enough) into the air with his shuddering companion. At present, the goods of the church no longer take shape to avenge themselves when they are appropriated to lay purposes, nor the churches either; many old ones in France are turned into barns, some I believe into barracks; but in the Pyrenees I never recollect to have seen a sacred edifice so converted. There seems great attention paid here to pious observances (outward ones at

least) and a general sentiment of respect towards ancient and holy usages, which if it does not absolutely proceed from conviction, is at least a step towards it.

All but night when we arrived at Luz,—fifteen miles* to the Cirque de Marboré, and of course fifteen back again, at least so they tell us here. I pitied my chairmen, and told them so; but they assured me that my compassion was misplaced. All they wished for was to have the same work every day; it was only when they were idle that their hearts were heavy. I had eight men for my chair, six of whom trotted beside it, ready to relieve those more actively employed. We certainly might have dispensed with two of the number; for I did not observe that they were ever called upon. One was an old man, the other a stripling and his grandson. The first a privileged joker, the last a mild soul who did nothing but gather field-flowers and present them to me, till my lap was so full that I was often obliged to watch my opportunity and slip down a handful through the arm of my chair, when his back was turned. Only one of the eight spoke French, (conversation pitch,)

* Quatre lieues de pays, six ordinary leagues.

the rest had but a few words, and those mixed up with patois. An interpreter has usually an air of full-blown consciousness about him; and well he may, being every moment appealed to. Mine was a proud man, and when the others gabbled, used to give me a Jove's nod, lofty—yet intimating a kind of intelligence between us, which admitted me in some degree to his level.

The authorities of Cauteretz regulate the fares of the chairmen, so that there is no possibility of imposition. Here there is no tariff; the innkeeper generally makes an arrangement for the prices both of chairs and horses, and in most cases satisfactorily. The bridle-path to Gavarnie is good, and might without much difficulty be converted into a regular *char à banc* road; but then the poor chairmen would be set adrift, and a luxurious mode of conveyance, favourable to thought, observation, and one's bones, lost to ricketty travellers like myself for ever.

END OF VOL. I.

Maurice and Co., Fenchurch-street.

ERRATA.

Page 14,	line 17,	*for*	melancholy	*read*	Melancholy.
33,	12,	..	darkens	..	the clouds darken.
48,	22,	..	Dolly Madge	..	Dolly or Madge.
55,	10,	..	tempted	..	tempting.
57,	16,	..	put neither	..	had neither.
113,	15,	..	Saturnine	..	Saturnin.
118,	3,	..	Giorgone	..	Giorgione.
121,	22,	..	trade port	..	trade river.
142,	11,	.	sky	..	sun.
186,	12,	..	Tilburino	..	Tilburina.
368,	23,	..	I do dot	..	I do not.

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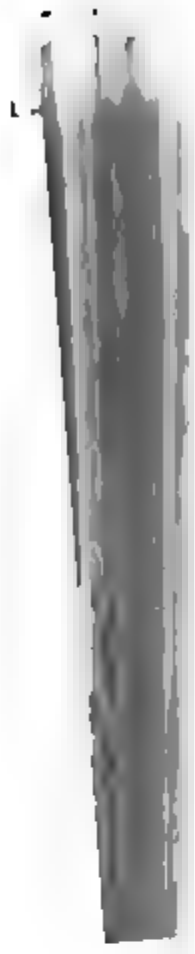

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SKETCHES

IN THE PYRENEES,

&c. &c.

VOL. II.

SKETCHES IN THE PYRENEES;

WITH SOME REMARKS

ON

LANGUEDOC, PROVENCE, AND THE CORNICE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"SLIGHT REMINISCENCES OF THE RHINE," AND

"THE GOSSIP'S WEEK."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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1837.

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ERRATA.

Page 16, line	9,	*for*	march to	*read*	march at.
101,	7,	..	Maubourquet	..	Maubourguet.
104,	11,	..	grove	..	grave.
109,	20,	..	fields	..	folds.
132, *et seq.*		..	Scrisse	..	Serisse.
145,	18,	..	cowslip	..	Cowslip.
162,	3,	..	vigour	..	rigour.
178,	11,	..	these	..	there.

SKETCHES IN THE PYRENEES,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

LUZ — PIC DE BERGOZ — VIEW FROM IT EACH WAY — LA COMPLAINTE DE MONTEBELLO — MY DOULCETTE MIGNONNETTE — GORGE DE LUZ — FEW STRANGERS IN THE PYRENEES, AND WHY.

BEHIND the village of Luz rises the lofty Bergoz,* terminating in a pic famous for the view which it commands. It is a green mountain, too steep in most parts for habitation; but where the slopes are gentler, its broad flanks are dotted with granges, whose summer inhabitants have already forsaken them. Higher up, we found flocks and herds browsing their way downwards; and the sound of their bells, so far from jarring against the dead silence that otherwise prevailed, seemed to

* Or Bergons, as it is also called.

ascent was much more fatiguing
to avoid wetting their feet; a t
are remarkably averse.

I have known others, from w
might be as little expected, who
A gallant officer who commande
in a momentous battle, (not W
that he never was so angry in
man, who in the heat of the engi
ed him into a pool: he was obl
wet feet, and dreaded his dam
than sword or ball.

A beautiful look-down on the p
fine surrounding country,—increa
at the top such a view! A hog's
the basin of Luz in its green, and

the narrow defile that unites it with the basin of Luz,—St. Savin, the chapel of La Pietà, and the town of Argelez visible, each on its cloudless elevation; the colouring gauzy grey, with light through it,—the pure soft grey of the Italian distance.

And then the press of mountains at the other side: the towers of Marboré, stretching from east to west; Mont Perdu a step behind blanched with snows, but too closely girded in by other mighties to be regally pre-eminent; the Brêche de Roland, with the sky of Spain looking through it—the true breach and the false; a sunbeam on the fall of Gavarnie, and a gathering of light on the soft basin of Pragnères, which opens just beneath us.

Between our perch and the amphitheatre of the Marboré, are the side-screens that rush downwards in grand continuous slopes; their broad flanks covered with wood or pastures, or furrowed with rocks, down whose rugged gullies the wild fall, or wee rattling stream, courses along unobserved among so many objects of higher interest. The combination is grand, and grave, and splendid; solemn from the magnitude and power of each

single feature, and the simple and sublime way in which they are put together; solemn too from the profound stillness, but with a fine radiance on the snow and in the sky,—the pale bright sky that covers them. The green pastures of the Comélie, and the soft plateaux of the near mountains, offer the most splendid tinting; but on the one which is closest to the eye, looking to the left, there are broad sweeps of juniper, contrasting its peculiar green with the more grassy verdure of the short herbage, that produce an effect of colouring which I have rarely seen equalled. From the pic beyond the ridge, the view is more extensive, the eye has freer scope; but the single pictures, taking each in its separate frame, have perhaps a more direct effect upon our sympathies. In the inside of this mountain is a cavern, inhabited by a crew of industrious fairies, famous spinners and most obliging ones, as the housewives here well know; for they have only to leave a bundle of flax at the entrance of their under-ground dwelling, and on returning are sure to find it converted into a beautiful, even thread, such as their fingers never could have produced. The difficulty is to find the opening of the cavern.

A shepherd brought us milk in a wooden can, with a ladle floating on it; so we sat down on the turf to do it justice—for it was excellent—leisurely. One of our men, who had served (as all have who are over forty) in the imperial army, and had been present at the death of Maréchal Lannes, asked leave to sing for us *La Complainte de Montebello*: the verse was as rude as the music.

"Dans une heure d'ici
Vous perdrez votre ami,"

said the dying marshal to the emperor, who held his hand,—at least so goes the ballad, and so sang the old soldier in a broken and dolesome voice that never had had music in it; but his comrades, who were clustered together on a small mound, while the singer sat a little apart and turned from them, listened with profound and most respectful attention, in which a sentiment of melancholy was obviously mingled. And, indeed, though the verse was rough, and the measure drawling, and the voice

"Full of harsh discords and unpleasing sharps,"

yet there was still something touching in the death-song of the illustrious warrior, doled out as it was

in a mountain solitude, by one who had served with him, and seen him die on the field of battle.

While we reposed, herds of cattle browsed below us, and the mountain horses played wild gambols, scouring rapidly round in one direction, then suddenly striking the earth and wheeling off in another. Two hawks floated gracefully above, crossing and recrossing each other; sometimes descending with a sweeping motion, then rising sunwards, and after a moment's eclipse, re-appearing as if chasing something invisible down towards the earth; while their shadows swept over the sunny turf, doubling their buoyant and beautifully balanced movements. As we returned, the sun had got a little behind the mountains, and threw forward their headlong shadows on the satiny surface of the pasture slopes, whose closely nibbled turf had not a knot in it. The effect was admirable; nothing intercepted the stationary reflection of the mountains themselves, and within their darkness the ruminating herds fed or reposed, with a seeming sense of peacefulness not shared by the frolicsome troop who still remained outside in the sunshine.

From that part of the mountain descent where the road forms a terrace elevated above the vil-

lage of Luz, the basin is seen to great advantage. It appears from thence of a triangular form, and the wood, which from below shows itself in spare trees too freely lopped of their branches, and dotted about singly, or planted in thin hedge-rows, is thrown by a change of position into masses at the base of the mountains, making rich bodies of shade and colouring. The look-down is of exceeding sweetness, the basin itself green as Eden, and watered by innumerable bubbling rills; the Gave of Gavarnie, beautiful as any of the four rivers of paradise, winding through the meadows, the torrent of Bastan hastening to unite its stream with that of its lovely neighbour, and then—being made one—shooting off through the defile of Luz to loiter amongst the meadows of Argelez; first taking the wild flood of Cauteretz, there sobered into gentleness, into its sweet co-partnership. To the right, the château of Sainte Marie on its rocky platform—iron-stained and mellow; the town below with its glistening roofs of purple slate; higher up the hamlet, higher still the grange; and above, the summits of the mountains that shelter and enclose all.

Ronsard wrote a hymn to the lark, and called it

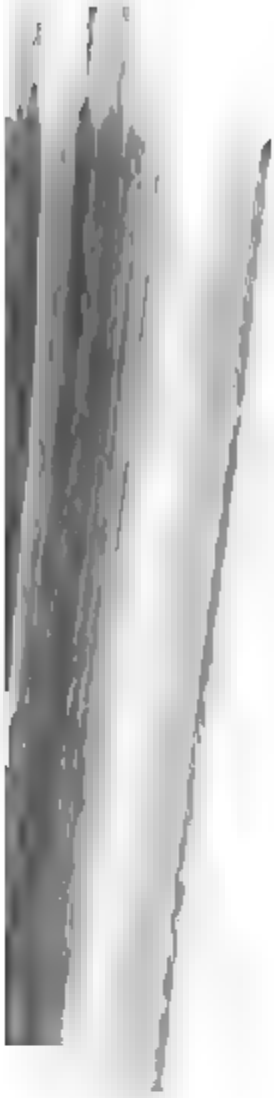
Doulcette Mignonnette; and there is a pretty little bird here, with an almond-green shade, or rather light, through its feathers, that answers to the name as if it was made for it. It pee-wits in such a melancholy key—yet so sweetly, hopping beside us, or making short flights from stone to bramble, with such pleasant, gentle friendliness, that I would set it to verse if I could. My chairmen have no name for it, and wonder at my asking for one. "C'est un petit oiseau," is the only answer I have ever been able to obtain to all my questions about the small voices of the desert, to which I have so often listened with curiosity and a certain unworldly, but not undelightful feeling, when I have heard their pretty matins, or sweet chirping vespers, in the solitudes of the forest.

I never saw any thing like the streams in this basin of Luz; such swelling, living crystal; so pure, swift, and abundant. A night of rain may have helped them, perhaps; but as, probably, they (like most of the Pyrenean rivers) run over granite or marble, not a soil of earth stains their transparency. A peasant stoops down at this moment, and scoops up a purl in the hollow of a

leaf,—being thirsty, I envy him the draught; the bright Falernian sparkling in its preciously wrought cup of calcedony would seem less tempting to my fancy. The man thinks otherwise; for he just cools his lips, and throwing away the rest, turns up a face that looks as if it had been hacked out of a piece of oak, and casts a piteous look, though a joking one, at my chairmen, who nod assent to his implied disrelish.

The gorge of Luz was glorious, as we returned this evening; every branch brought out, every leaf defined, every shadow helping a light, and the beauty of individual form radiantly outlined, without hindrance, or rather with great assistance, to the breadth and splendour of the general effect.

Again at Cauteretz. The more I see of this beautiful country, the more I feel surprised at its being so little visited by ramblers from other lands. Here are no Russians,—at present (except our own countrymen) the most universal travellers; no Germans; and as representatives of Great Britain, only two gentlemen and their wives, temporary residents at Pau, and ourselves. Sometimes—though rarely, an Englishman appears at the



almost every one go
If the allurements of
opinion of the genera
Italy, and the facilitie
have been already sift
sooner or later, this
sought for, for its own
velling now along the s
quiring look towards its
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of France, except to in
travellers, and a still s
naturalists, will then beco
things, the pasture of the
to the profanation of bad
poetic feeling.

their hasty or prejudiced judgments, and compelled to allow, or won over to feel, that the landscape of the Pyrenees is not only relatively, but virtually and most eminently beautiful; and that it does not owe its power and charm to the force of contrast, but to its own intrinsic dignity and native loveliness.

CHAPTER II.

THE COMING DOWN OF THE SHEPHERDS—FETE OF THE ASSUMPTION—THE NOTE OF PREPARATION—BALLADINS—DISCREET GAIETY—CORNEILLE AND RACINE PERFORMED IN THE PYRENEES—AUTUMN PERCEPTIBLE BEFORE IT IS VISIBLE—CHATEAU DE BEAUCENS—CHARACTER OF THE SCENERY—EFFECT ON THE MIND—THE RUINS—THE CHAPEL OF BEDOURET—ST. ORRENS.

"STAY another week," has been more than once said to us, "and you will see the shepherds returning from the high pastures with their flocks and their dogs, sole companions of their lonely sojourn in the mountains; you will hear the music of their pipes, and witness their meetings—after five or six months of utter solitude—with their families and friends." What images of pastoral and patriarchal life did this simple picture present! what Bible recollections did it draw out from their hiding-places! we talked of nothing but the coming of the flocks, and looked out for them as

:hildren do for the Hallowe'en, or the twelfth-
ıight gambol.

Yesterday evening the sound of sheep bells, ap-
›roaching from a distance, came suddenly upon
ıs. What could it be? It was yet some days to
he expected one; but looking from my window,
[saw the sheep descending the hilly street just as
hey do in the journeys of the patriarchs in the old
apestries, each flock accompanied by a guard of
ierce dogs, of that superb race peculiar to the
›yrenees, and every shepherd armed with a short
lub: good against wolves, we thought, but of
›urse a mere club of parade on the present oc-
sion.

The sheep were fat, the tones of their bells deep
l sonorous, the dogs magnificent, and the shep-
ds like the shepherds of Sechem. There was
pipe, it was true, no household or heartfelt
ting, no long look-out with love and joy in it
those who had tarried behind: but at the
:nt we scarcely missed these auxiliaries; the
made their own sweet music, and there was
ıing simple and antique in the scene which
its grave complexion. Suddenly a shep-
-ang from behind the ranks, and, brandish-

ing his club, levelled a blow at another who was a step or two before him: it was returned with fury, and in a moment the aggressor was laid prostrate. He rose instantly, covered with blood: I closed my window, but the cries and sounds of blows came through it. At length the gens d'armes appeared, separated the combatants, and conveyed them both to prison; and thus ended part the first of the pastoral drama, and the only scene of violence which has been enacted this season in the mountains.

To-day is the fête of the Assumption, the grand fête of Cauteretz, the fête of the balladins, of the chairmen, in short of all those who wish to partake of its gaieties. The programme is superb—games, races, *mat de cocagne*, &c.; then come *les ballades*, "Messieurs les balladins," as they are respectfully styled in the setting forth, will arrive at three o'clock in separate bands, each band attired in the costume of its district, and preceded by instruments of music. Prizes will be adjudged to the most agile dancers, after which various feats of activity are to follow; then fire-works in the mountains, and last of all a ball. No attraction, in short, left unemployed, (gratis plays and pudding ex-

cepted,) which the fête of St. Louis, or St. Charles, or St. Philippe, could hold out at Paris itself.

At an early hour this morning the note of preparation sounded from all quarters; large boughs were placed before the houses, tri-coloured flags floated from the windows, drums were occasionally heard, servant girls ran to and fro with water-pots and fish-kettles, and others passed already dressed for the day,—smart and showy, not tawdry, as our girls are sure to be when they mix two colours; but here, as elsewhere, I have made the remark, that young females in the humbler classes of life never become a holiday dress so well as a neat working one; not being every day wear it sits stiffly, and besides gives pretensions always awkwardly supported. A fine girl, whom I have often noticed as conferring dignity on her madrass, has just passed in a full once-a-year toilette: as a thistle she was very stately; but vanity would make an artichoke of her, and nothing can be more hard and sticky.

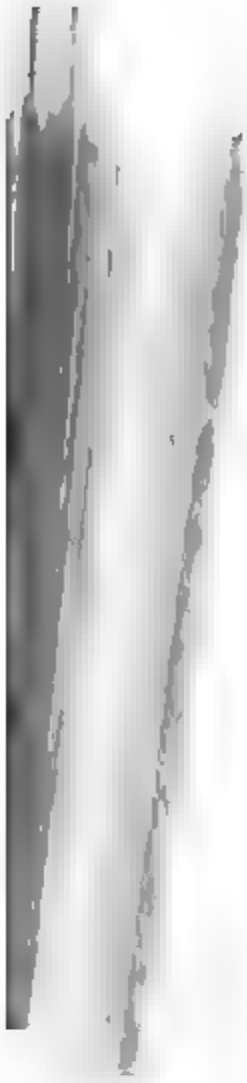
The balladins of the neighbouring districts have proved faithless, and declined entering the lists; so the pig, sheep, goat, and handsome piece of broad-cloth, which were to have been contended

for, fall without opposition to the children of the soil, who, equipped in white trowsers, scarlet sashes, and blue berrêts, dance through the principal street, fluttering small tri-coloured flags, and making antics after the true *pas de l'ours* fashion. A kind of mock combat with small sticks, to a dull dancing-dog measure, varies the heavy routine of the inexpressive ballade, and some boys, fantastically dressed, march to the head of the troop as guardians of the prizes, which, notwithstanding the efforts made to give a dramatic effect to the business, cut a very homely figure.

We have soldiers, too: what in France can be done without them? Half a dozen gens d'armes, reinforced by as many more rustics of the *garde urbaine*, begin to show themselves; nothing, however, can be more tranquilly disposed than the people, and here I must say (though I believe that I have said it elsewhere before) that the French have a great advantage over us. Our cakes-and-ale people are often quarrelsome and turbulent when they are numerous; but the French make merely cheerful meetings of their popular festivities, and never disgrace them by disorder. No intoxicated brawler interrupts the general harmony,

or coarse expression shocks the delicate ear; no private rancour breaks out in the hour of indulgence, or feeling of casual excitement produces the result of deliberate vengeance. It is now night: the games are over, the prizes adjudged, the dancers tired out, the fire-works extinguished, and not a sound of turbulence has been heard during this long day of recreation; nor, after sports which called for prodigious physical exertion, have the actors in them found it necessary to go through the restorative process of drinking. This capability of temperate enjoyment I have already noticed as a delightful feature in the French character—the slight boil-over among the Jacobs and Labans of yesterday goes for nothing; the general rule, to which it makes a rare exception, still holds good: besides that affair of the patriarchs, was one of family pique, a feeling which lords it over national and individual character more than almost any other with which I am acquainted.

But of this impress of decency on the popular recreations which I find so charming in France, all (or nearly all) the migrating British can judge. Who has not been at St. Cloud?—the most popular of the many fêtes that take place annually



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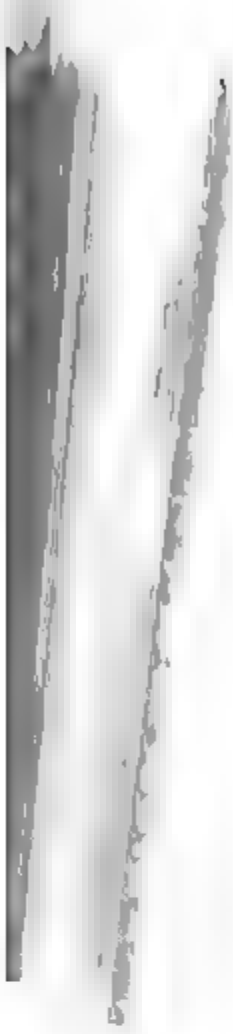
by peasants and working men; and these plays are not mysteries, nor yet the Christmas carol, or the Epiphany put in action; but the Cid, or Mithridate, or Athalie. As in the days of Theseus, women are not permitted to act; but Flute, Snout, Quince, Bottom, Snug, and Starveling, are all ready to rasp off their beards and subdue their rough voices to the indignant pleadings of Chimene, or the endless lamentations of Andromache. A jobbing carpenter in a hamlet of Béarn, a family man, no longer in his "salad days," and with a most hard-working visage, Talma'd it in Britannicus not long ago, to the admiration of the multitude. Nice critics pronounced his acting excellent; and he himself found the sport so engaging, that had he not been both fisherman and carpenter,—so of course full handed,—he would have liked well enough (he told me) to have gone on with it.

August 27th. Three or four ungenial days have frightened away half the visitors of Cauteretz; but now August has come again, and so charmingly attired, with such a bright thanksgiving air, as if she felt herself all the better for the course of baths to which her sun-dried charms have been recently submitted. Yet, though sunshine enters



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images, all its moral loveliness, to touch, and fill, and chasten the heart which seeks the spirit of its mystery.

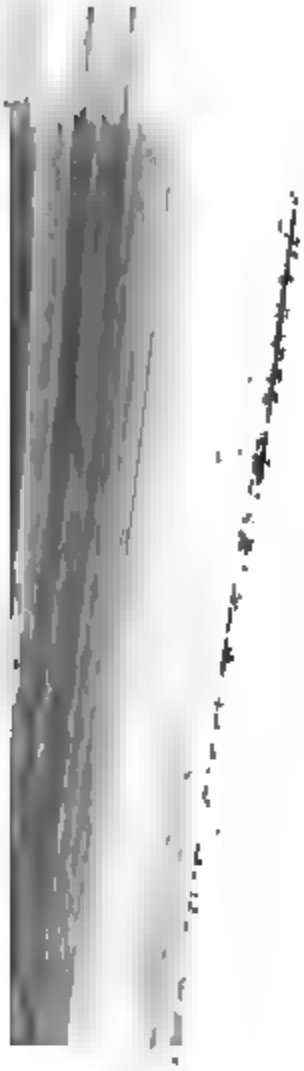
28th. Passed our morning at Beaucens, the ruined château of the Rohan Rocheforts, which we had only seen from the terrace of Despourrins. Madame de Motteville saw it in 1660, as she travelled towards Bayonne to meet the court, who were sojourning there for the double purpose of ratifying the treaty of peace between France and Spain, and concluding the marriage between Louis XIV. and the good-natured Infanta, who was destined to learn lessons of patience, and practise them, on the throne of France. According to her account, it was then a dismal concern, and almost inaccessible; so that she fancied it must have been " l'habitation d'Urgande la déconnue." This clever and very entertaining court-favourite, calls the people of the Pyrenees *méchants;* and adds, " la rusticité du climat les rend cruels." The same sun still shines upon the beautiful Lavedan; but its influence on the moral character of the inhabitants seems more benignantly exercised. Leaving the inevitable Pierrefitte, as usual, behind us, and turning for a little way towards the gorge of Luz,

we crossed its romantic opening, and following the course of the river, arrived at a hamlet where the carriage-road ceases. My chair had followed me from Pierrefitte, (needlessly, as it proved, for we afterwards found out that we could have got one where we stopped,) and the rest of the family party had brought their nimble feet with them, and found good use for their services; for the narrow road being in many places converted into a stream and all but impassable, they had to jump from stone to stone, clamber up one side of the hedge and down at the other, or skim their way over the water like swallows—minus wings, which made some difference. But the meadow paths were delightful, and brought us, over a carpet of wild flowers and sweet-scented herbs, to the foot of the hill on which the ruin stands. In ascending we passed the hamlet of Beaucens; a kind of back forest solitude, still and umbrageous as an Indian village; bedded in shade, and watered by pure rills, but deplorably peopled: not a soul without a goître, and all dirty and wretched looking, though not ill-clothed; decently housed too, but apparently not benefited by means from which others would have extracted comfort. Remarked three

or four crétins; one a child, and a melancholy spectacle, sitting in a tranquil posture at a door, and roaring at measured intervals like a wild beast: the contrast between the repose of his body and the fierce cry mechanically uttered, and as if by something that had life within him but was not himself, was awfully unnatural. I have since thought that it was probably market-day at Argelez, and that the hale, the active, and the industrious had trotted there with their wares, leaving the sick, the inefficient, and the very poor, who have no means of traffic, to take care of themselves and each other.

Be this as it may, a troop followed us up to the top of the hill, clacking their patois harshly, and presenting a forbidding spectacle of uncleanness, apparently not necessitated by circumstances. Having been for some time accustomed to the comfortable and orderly appearance of the peasants about Cauteretz, their look of wretchedness struck us painfully; however, the chairmen said they were not poor (distressed), but only beggars. A nice distinction, which might be applied more extensively.

At last, having got what they could, they



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fixing it to a resting-place. We sat "by the walls of Balclutha, and they were desolate;" the thistle grew there and the long grass, and the bramble made room for itself in the revel hall and in the lady's chamber. We knew nothing either of knight or lady; they were not familiar to us by story, nor endeared to us by the companionship of fancy: we knew that they were Rohan Rocheforts, and no more; but we felt the influence of the past, and sat down thoughtfully amidst its fragments. The air was sweet, the sky still, the silence breathless: it is difficult to describe the sense of disengagement from the world, the train of thought, the peace of heaven which possess the soul in such scenes and moments; if there be one spark of fire in the breast, how it mounts upwards, how it kindles into incense as it ascends.

As we came down the hill, the sun left us,—not to set, but to hide itself behind the soft grey clouds, of which the sky has been all day full. There was now little colouring in the landscape, and that little was dark and streamy, yet great effect was produced, and as if by unseen means; wonderful clearness and depth in the darkness, and

a transparency in the narrow sky-line that edged the horizon, like pale fluid silver.

Of the ruins there remains but little; a square tower covered with ivy, part of the bastioned wall, a gate-way, and some arched relics of the interior. The want of space must have been always against grandeur; yet I can fancy that the vow of the heron, or of the gory shirt, may have passed from lip to lip within the hall; or that in softer times the stately chatelaine may have overlooked from her elevated seat, quaintly wrought with divers colours, the maidens of her household, while their slender fingers raised flowers of gold and flowers of silver from the dark tissue, or hung red apples on green trees; or, with a loftier aim, designed the human figure, suspending Absalom to the oak, or lifting up the obedient arm of Abraham.

But whatever it may have been, matters not now. There is still enough left for interest; its site is beautiful, its colouring soft and gracious, its aspect from the valley romantic. There is always something profoundly expressive in the dismantling touch of time; all that it has withdrawn,

fancy replaces with activity, and even in the midst of the beggars and crétins of Beaucens, recalls the Rohan Rocheforts and the red-cross banners of the feodal times,—times of romance to us, whatever they may have been to those who lived in them.

In the village below, we again met the vine throwing about its 'marriageable arms' round the orchard trees. It is thus that it looks beautiful; the trimmed and cropped vine of the regular wine countries is rather a drawback on scenery. But there are sorer drawbacks here: as we came down the road, two poor idiot-looking boys stood by the way-side and grinned at us; their faces were aged and wrinkled, and their cheeks white and leathery. Such sights take painful hold of the mind, discolouring Nature's loveliness, and turning thought from the contemplation of her beauty.

It was not till after we had left Beaucens far behind us, that we learned that higher up in the hills is a holy shrine called the chapel of Bedouret, whose guardians are three women that, like Anna the prophetess, "depart not from the temple," serving the Virgin—to whom it is dedicated—with

fastings and prayers night and day. When one dies, another immediately presents herself, eager to devote her life to the same sacred office.

Not far from this mountain fane, are the ruins of the monastery of St. Orrens. Like St. Savin, he was noble, a Spaniard, and a hermit; but called by a miracle from his solitude, exchanged his staff for a crosier, and died archbishop of Auch.

CHAPTER III.

SCENE-SHIFTING—THE COMING HOME OF THE FLOCKS—SHEPHERDS AND THEIR DOGS—PEASANTS OF THE PYRENEES—LOVE OF HOME AND OF NATURE—GAIETY NOT ALWAYS HAPPINESS—ADIEU TO THE BATHS—LE BOUQUET D'ADIEU—MORNING—THE SONG OF THE SHEPHERD—SOUNDS AND IMAGES OF SORROW—THEIR EFFECTS ON DIFFERENT MINDS.

August 30th. Foul skies after fair promises. Yesterday was like a vernal day in Italy, and now it is as grey as autumn in a northern country, the wind nipping, and snow already on the near mountain tops. This sudden change seems to be the general signal of departure: all the post horses are in requisition, and "Je pars demain;" or "Juidi;" or "Vendredi;" infallibly follows the "Bon jour."

As cold is my mortal enemy, we too are going, in hopes of meeting the blessed sun again at Bagnères, where we shall be more out of the shadow of the mountains; and probably Cauteretz will, before long, have returned to its seven or eight

months' solitude; and its *Place*,—which for the last few weeks has been an arena for ambulating bears, monkeys, tumblers, rope-dancers, etc.—a show-board for balloons, ballades, the sentimental errors of Punch and the sorrows of Judy, be left to the poor Spaniards, who are flocking down from their mountains to take advantage of the cheap season, and bathe their lame hands and rickety feet, without the risk of offending the civets, or coming "between the wind and their nobility."

The coming home of the flocks, which is now daily taking place, does not present a scene of so much interest as I had looked for. It is a simple pastoral tranquilly got up—the opening burst excepted; but I had imagined the shepherds returning joyfully after their six months' sojourn in the desert, and pictured to myself their wives and children coming out to meet them with thankful hearts and happy faces. I expected family gatherings, the bagpipe, and the galoubet; the wheaten loaf and the wine-flagon, with many other things that seem now to my sobered fancy almost fantastical. But every thing is conducted with the solemnity of an interment; each flock is preceded or followed by an ass lightly freighted, probably

with the remnant of the meal, the blanket, and the soup-kettle; two or three superb goats, who have been the nursing mothers of the shepherd in his solitude, usually march at the head of each division; presenting themselves, like goats of quality, with the easy assurance of high breeding, and appearing sensible of the beauty of their long hair, which shines like floss silk. Then come the sheep, tottering under the weight of their fat and fleece; and close to them the *gros dogue*, a magnificent monster of the true Pyrenean breed, bold as a lion, and vigilant as a Spanish duenna. In the van marches a shepherd, another sometimes brings up the rear, comfortably clad in the vest, trousers, and berrêt of grave brown; the unity of colour has a serious but not unpleasing effect, and the berrêt, as an ancient thing, goes well with the shepherd's staff and wallet.

And thus they pass on with anxious and thoughtful visages, wholly occupied with the care of their flocks, (who know the voice of their shepherd and answer to it obediently,) looking neither to the right nor to the left, as men returning home from exile might be expected to do; but presenting the same inflexible sobriety of deportment, the

same undeviating course, until they arrive at the place of their destination. There is certainly nothing striking in their staidness, though there is something pleasing in its grave simplicity; and the serene philosophy with which the shepherd not only supports but enjoys his lonely life, has a moral in it at once dignified and touching.

The dogs of the Pyrenees are said not to live long when transported to another country; and sometimes, guided by that wonderful instinct which seems almost to supply the place of reason, and by its marvellous impulsion to produce effects surer even than those of memory, have been known to retrace their way back to the mountains by new and untraversed paths, and through all the impediments of rock and flood which an anarchical nature has thrown in their way.

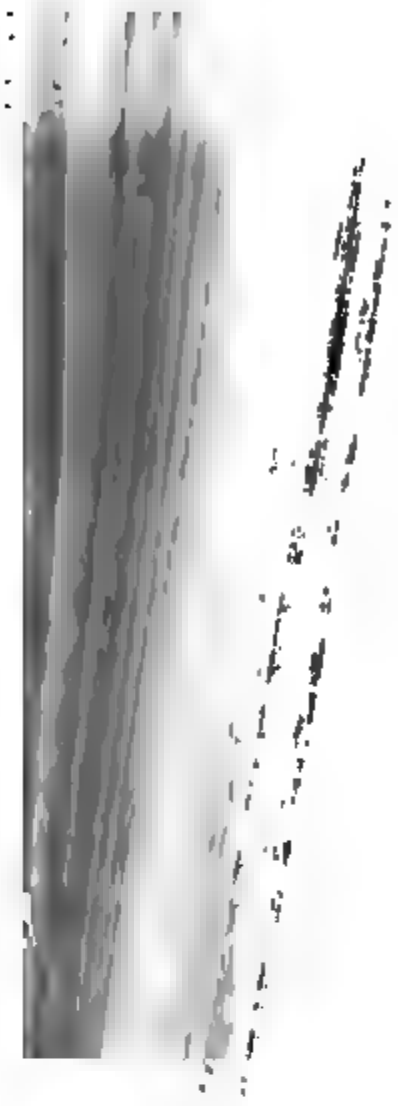
Setting aside the mercenary feeling, which does not probably extend its influence beyond the atmosphere of the watering-places, the peasant of the Pyrenees seems made of excellent stuff: frank and cordial, less courteous, or perhaps fine-witted, in the country of Bigorre than in that of Béarn, though perhaps not less kindly, there is something of decency in his exterior, and of independence in

his mien, which conciliates esteem. Many here have served in the armies of Napoleon, whom they seem to look upon as a something between the god Mars and the 'petit caporal,' whose genus they do not exactly comprehend; but they perfectly remember that, in his time, valour made its way to honour and glory; that, like Pistol, every soldier might say,

> "The world's mine oyster,
> Which I with sword will open."

It was not alone "the bubble reputation" that was sought for in the cannon's mouth, but the gold and purple of the world also,—the summit of the pedestal. Like Mahomet, Napoleon made known to his followers, that "in the shade of the scimitars, paradise was prefigured,"—an immediate paradise, of which they took instant possession.

The seemingly (and, I believe, really) happy condition of the peasants here, who are usually small proprietors, and, as their dress denotes, sufficiently at ease to lay by for a certain degree of luxury, makes the seriousness of their habitual deportment, as contrasted with the lively image previously formed of French volatility, appear remarkable to strangers; who, drawing their idea



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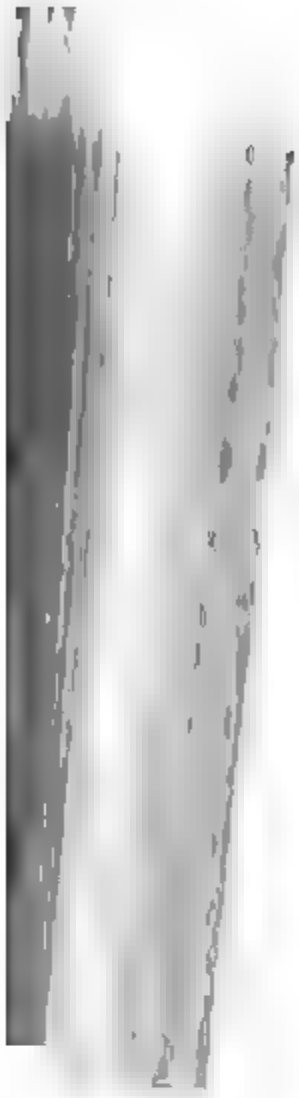
thies would of itself account for the attachment which the inhabitants of unfrequented countries feel for their mountains and their valleys, even if the natural instinct and memory of love, which attaches us to the place of our birth and the scenes of our childhood, never existed.

As the peasants here cannot speak our language, nor we theirs, we can know but little of their minds and feelings; but such as have served, and acquired in their military capacity a smattering of French, seem not to have been dazzled by the world out of their love of home. One of my chairmen had been at Paris with the army: I asked him how he liked it, expecting raptures. He said calmly, "C'est un joli petit endroit,—pas mal."

Uneducated minds, accustomed to the great works of nature, are seldom astonished by the brick and mortar performances of man. I recollect an old shepherd of Patterdale, who had been at Chester, once saying to us, (speaking of the town,) "It is a poor mean place: God has had nothing to do with it." His ideas of magnificence were borrowed from more splendid sources than those within the command of architectural ingenuity; the deep, indrawn, devotional feeling with which the inhabi-



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The system of rural economy in the valleys of the high Pyrenees, differs little from that of the Alps. Ramond remarks this almost minutious similitude; and accounts for it by the observation, that man is every where the same, and that similar situations suggest similar means of action. In the low valleys the song of the nightingale fills the air with its power and sweetness, and all our pretty home warblers are heard in the woods and vineyards. In the mountains, the eagle, the bearded vulture, the 'grand duc,' the hawk, the heath-cock, the wood-hen, the linnet of the Alps, the blackbird of the rocks, and many other wild winged things find their home; so do innumerable plants and flowers, which the botanist discovers with delight; the insect tribes are beautiful, various, and harmless too, as far as I have seen. I have often felt musquitoes comfortably settled on my forehead at Pau, but never was stung by one of them.

31st. Up early, and off to the Rallière to take

my last glass of the waters, and thank the good woman (I can hardly call her nymph) of the fount, for the beautiful farewell-nosegay which she brought me yesterday,—dahlias like precious stones; there was the amethyst and the ruby, the deep glowing jacinthe and paler topaz; and mixing with them, some wild strawberry-blossoms, as if Spring had sent her little pearly messengers to say, "Don't forget me; I shall come again."

How delightful it is to be abroad with nature in the early morning! how beautiful is her gladness, how full of harmony and joy the greetings of the forest and the fields! Every little bird warbling its song of thankfulness from its own green bough, and the crackling bark, the stirring grass, the light rustle of the leaves, the tall grove saluting the sunbeams that just gild its top with their early glory; the 'rooky wood,' sending out one by one its cawing tenants, the dew-drops dressing out the grass in its gala robe of brightness, every drop making a little globe more beautifully mathematical in its form than the most cunningly rounded diamond; and buds, leaves, blossoms, all putting on their robes of gladness as if they were

thanking heaven for having given them a new day. The heart must indeed be full of care that shuts itself against the delicious contagion.

Notwithstanding the early hour, the arcade and terrace of the baths were more lively than usual. Two or three cloaked figures walked up and down at a brisk health-begging pace; others, considering repose as better than action after their mineral draught, sat glued upon benches at each side of the fount. One fair creature peeped out from her bath all flushed and steamy; another sketched the capa of a Spanish shepherd; a group of little girls filled up the steps, one singing loudly, and the rest tabering upon their breasts like the maids of Huzzab. I admired their good-humoured philosophy; every five minutes they were routed by a passing chair,—all one to them; back they came the next moment to the seat, and the song, and the tabering, as if they had never been disturbed. In towns, the children of the poor are drudges from their infancy, used to all the craft and shifts that necessity suggests, and speedily losing the happy thoughtlessness of childhood in the premature anxieties of their hard-working existence. In the country, poverty is less heavily felt, and solicitude

comes later. There is a fine heedless lapse, a happy daisy-picking prime, which the gentle labour of the distaff or the knitting-needle plyed at the cabin door, or amongst the birds and bushes, or in the home chimney-corner, scarcely interrupts. Children are like flowers, they need an atmosphere that suits them; the pot of marum in the cottage window has more country sweetness in its scant leaves, than the fine-drawn carnation that hangs its streaked head from the frame of crossed laths in the sky-light of a town garret.

Last night some young men of the village, who have lately taken to singing through the streets at serenading time, droned out the song of the shepherd under our windows,—and O how dismally! They talk now of the head voice, and the throat voice; but these chaunters disdained either, and dragged up their notes manfully from the pit of the stomach with the true cathedral tug. In the active days of the church, no transgressing nun, or apostate monk, was ever buried or burned alive to more melancholy music; no dying abbess ever anthemed out of the world more mournfully: yet it was meant in pleasantness, and the song is considered as meet music for a rustic festival. People

who live in the world, or for it, fly from the impression of sadness; while *the people* love the emotions awakened by sounds and images of sorrow. Popular music is usually plaintive; the song of the shepherd is a dirge, and while the fisherman casts his net he whistles some rude ditty, with the moaning of the wind and the cry of the sea-mew in it.

Perhaps it may be that fantastic sorrows, fostered till they become real ones, or real sorrows engendered by the agency of the passions or the workings of over-wrought sensibility, may so far absorb the mind of the artificial and fastidious man, that, in the representation of distress, nothing may meet his eye but the naked wretchedness with which his shrinking egotism shuns to be acquainted. Or it may be, that he sees in it things which come too home to the present, or seem to anticipate the future with a too near show of probability. Perhaps his real world abounds too much in shadow to make darkness welcome; and those images which carry him from himself, or from that which he dreads for himself, into the sunny land of cheerfulness and promise, are what he seeks. He thanks

those who make him laugh, because for the moment they make him forget; but the exhibition of sorrow is a return upon self, which offends and shocks.

But the natural man, whose passions are not sharpened by contact, but on the contrary, subdued by daily and laborious exertion, or thrown into vulgar and weakening channels, and whose sensibility—not sublimated by visionary or romantic indulgence—seldom exceeds the bounds of kind-heartedness, finds in the exaggeration of distress, in the spreading out of wretchedness, a powerful excitement, which to a nature unused to be excited is like the gift of a new sense. He traces no painful similitude between the fiction and his own existence, or its chances; his feelings are free, and altogether independent of fears or recollections; he looks on as a child safe in the arms of its mother does at a pantomime; the freaks of the masked harlequin, which were he within the reach of the wooden sword might create terror, seen at a distance, and in the midst of positive safety, excite only joy. The ballad, which to a stimulated or a worn-out imagination conveys the wail-

ings of ruined hopes and sorrowing memory, is to him the song of repose,—a pleasant contrast by its gentle tenderness to his rugged habits, or by its deep despair to his customary cheerfulness; and he listens to it with the same kind of egotistical pleasure, with which the howling of the tempest sometimes fills the mind of those who hear it from their soft beds and storm-proof shelter.

CHAPTER IV.

VALLEY OF AZUN—THE MISSION—NOTRE DAME DE POUEY LA UNT—PREACHING IN THE MOUNTAINS—CHRISTIAN BEDOUINS—COSTUMES—THE CHURCH-YARD—OLD AGE AND YOUTH—THE OULE OF AZUN—THE VILLAGE INN—CREAM AND COMPLIMENTS—PIETY IN THE MOUNTAINS—LAUGHTER AND FROWNS—RETURN THROUGH THE VALLEY AT EVENING—BEAUTY OVERLOOKED—THE PRIESTESS PEASANT—SUPPER AND ADVICE.

DIVERGING westward from the little town of Argelez is the valley of Azun. To see it thoroughly, we left Cauteretz in the early morning, and on arriving at Pierrefitte, ordered a chair and horses for the excursion, which followed us to Argelez; none of the former and few of the latter being kept there.

Going up the valley in a flaming sunshine as we did, is seeing it to the utmost disadvantage, at least in its open parts. When the finely toned and tinged mountains at its head are approached, then they make shadows for themselves, and the Pic d'Arrens shows the snow on its summit splendidly.

The first winding up from Argelez is delicious; a climbing road, that makes its way gently above grassy slopes and amidst prodigious chestnut-trees, and walnuts of almost equal beauty; but we were not altogether satisfied; things looked bleary, not rich and soft, and yet the valley belongs entirely to the mellow style of landscape. As we passed on, broiling, a group of tinkers pursued their vocation under the shadow of an arch: the man was soldering pans, the woman blowing the fire; he with a pale cruel eye, thin hair, ruddy colouring, and a bull's throat, denoting strength for all savage purposes; she a Medea, with horrible locks, grey and streaming. A desperate-looking pair, with imps to match them. What a sweet family party to stumble on in a lonesome lane by the light of the glow-worm! But the poor imps were to be pitied; for as there is not in the whole range of moral deformity any thing more revolting to humanity than the spectacle of childhood corrupted by parental example, so is there nothing that excites a deeper or more intense feeling of compassion.

There were some pleasant resting-places for the eye as we went along, and good leaps downwards

through the broad branches on the windings of the river, that made wild sweeps and wild music below amongst the meadows; but still the sun glared, and I felt that either I was not up to the scenery, or the scenery not up to my imaginings. But as we approached the head of the valley, the sun was lower in the horizon, and its whole beauty made itself known,—its gentle yet majestic beauty, deep, still, sequestered. We had chanced to light upon the opening of a mission: the word *mission* had its effect in the sclitude of the mountains; it brought to mind the preaching in the desert, when the first Christian worshippers gathered together in the early days of their believing, to hear the doctrine of pure faith, and simple, entire, self-sacrificing piety. We met many persons returning from the *prêche* who had received comfort; chiefly hooded women in their solemn capuchons of white or black cloth covering them from head to foot, the eyes alone visible. One (an aged female) exalted to enthusiasm, talked of the missionary's eloquence as if there had been a foretaste of heaven in it; or that St. John had come again into the wilderness to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

We went up to the chapel of Nôtre Dame Pouey la Unt, beautifully set down upon a platform, overlooking a shut-in world of sweet and serene aspect, and having for its rough pavement the rock on which it is built. A fissure runs through it, and when it rains, a stream through the fissure; but the walls are panelled brown and gold, the roof azure starred with gold, the pillars of the high altar twisted like those of the baldaquin of St. Peter's at Rome,—gorgeously gilt and gracefully wreathed with vine-leaves, and tendrils, and bunches of grapes all gold, or its likeness. Over the porch is inscribed

MOSTRA TE ESSE MATREM,

and the holy Mary, multiplied within in gilding and in silvering, is believed by the inhabitants of the valley, who do her humble homage, to show herself by many sweet acts of love and graciousness to be indeed their mother.

We were too late for the *prêche*, and too early; the morning service was over, and the evening one not to begin till towards nightfall. We regretted that we were not able to stay for it; a sermon delivered with earnestness, and in the calm of evening in the hollow of the mountains, promised

something primitive and holy, becoming the serious communication of the word of God to a congregation of simple and believing people. The early Christians, compelled to worship in remote places, chose such spots as this, hidden from all eyes but those which looked down upon them from heaven, and prayed in the shadow of the valley or the hollows of the rock, concealing the symbols of their faith lest they should be exposed to profanation; but if surprised, dying for it joyfully.

Notwithstanding the grave and edified deportment of the elders, male and female, there was no chance of an offensive display of fanaticism; for though the girls of the village had already undergone the discipline of two sermons, there were certainly no camp-meeting terrors visible: on the contrary, some played at hide-and-seek in the empty chapel of Our Lady, holding neither pulpit or confessional as too sacred for their gay purpose; nor did the peasant who acted the part of sacristan, though he wore a blue berrêt and talked of keeping sheep upon the mountains, appear in the least shocked at the indecorum,—indeed his eyes joined in it.

These girls, and their sacristan too, had picture

about them; but it was not in the gold and silver chapel on the consecrated mount, but down below in the church of Arrens, the last village of the valley, tha tthe real Rembrandts were—the devout antients, who, wrapped in their long capuchons of white or black, knelt on the pavement, some in the broad light, others in the vague shadow. Many sat on their legs Arab-fashion, with their shoes, which they had taken off on entering, placed before them—such desert groupes! Christian Bedouins, converts from the wilderness,—looking so at least, with nothing but the eyes visible, and those only gleamingly through the opening of the long mantle. I never saw better pencil-food, and thought-food too; there was a dervish-looking figure spread out in a dim nook on the pavement, with his slippers beside him; and not far off a woman, who had turned up the skirt of her black robe over her face, as if to bury herself in holy abstraction, that brought all that was said and done eighteen hundred years ago in far-off Palestine like a yesterday to the mind. In the churchyard (a grassy one with flat tomb-stones, like our village cemeteries,) were small parties scattered about; the men keeping close company, the women

making separate groupes, as is usually the case in rustic meetings; altogether a well-dressed, happy, handsome population, set off by the holiday gear, worn for the mission as well as for the dance; but the female venerables all in mourning, except the capulet, which was occasionally scarlet,—tall figures, with a prodigious length of black from the hip to the heel, and magician-like faces, bronzed, bearded, and unwoman-like, though often dignified. The girls were comely, joyous-looking souls, wearing the bright handkerchief tied at one side of the head, and sometimes the scarlet capulet thrown coquettishly over it with a pleasant air of pretension,—that was not the less pretension for its frank simplicity.

The effect of this Greek looking head-dress, not put on with a 'follow me shepherds' air, as at Bordeaux or Pau, but knotted negligently over the smooth tresses, is exceedingly pretty if the face be agreeable. We had a chamber-maid at the inn at Luz, who, with her dark hair drawn off in a smooth band from one side of her forehead and the low handkerchief on the other, was a perfect Maid of Athens; but then the countenance was as mild as it was handsome: a confident one thus arranged,

becomes audacious. The young men of Azun were not behind hand with the lassies in smartness, and looked upright and spirited in their dark vests and berrêts, relieved by the lively waistcoat or scarlet sash, and further brightened up by the showy neckcloth, as usual carelessly knotted below the open shirt-collar.

Old age does not always understand youth, or even childhood; it forgets its language,—and more, its emotions. A little girl of five years old, who was sitting on the grass near to a grave-stone, had got possession of a cracked saucer, which she was making powder of with the sole of her shoe. Unluckily, she caught the eye of one of the black capulets, who sprang forward, and twisting her round, spun her off a considerable distance from her harmless occupation, without trying reason, (of which children have such a quick perception,) or yet gentle reproof; or remembering that it was to the active principle in want of occupation that the sin of crockery pounding was attributable, and not to any individual spirit of mischief. It is true that children do seem sometimes to have the passion of destruction, and an enjoyment in it, as if the fracas delighted their ear, or the power implied

by its exercise their vanity; but their grandams are not always aware how much more effectual a wise and gentle word would be, than a spin round into a bed of nettles. The old woman was, however, delighted with her exploit, and while the child continued crying, set about gathering certain weeds, which, by the care she took in their selection, were evidently intended for medical purposes. I observed that she only plucked such as grew upon or close to the graves, as if their power consisted in their contact with the dead. "Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharoah is sold for balsams."

The valleys of the Pyrenees usually terminate in amphitheatres, called by the peasant *oules*. The Oule of Azun, darkening as the sun sank behind it, grew into such beauty, that we turned from it with regret; there was something so serene, so elevated, so religious in the character of the landscape, that the mind seemed bettered by its contemplation. We had roamed about until we were weary, and as evening drew on, began to think that a draught of milk would be a very agreeable refreshment; there was only one place in which it could be procured, and that was the pub-

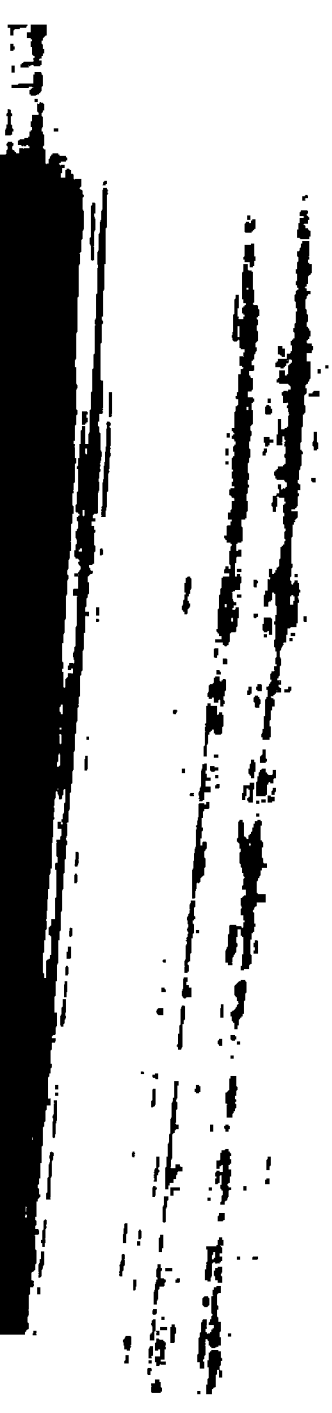
lic-house of the village, which was already crowded with persons of both sexes: however, we went in, and were served with most delicious cream in a neat kitchen, where a family party, Flemish as Meiris's pencil could have made them, were at dinner. The table-cloth was white, the ragout savoury, the company intent and solemn. I complimented the matron, who headed the table, on the magnificence of her neck-handkerchief, all silk—purple silk, with a border of yellow roses outlined with gold colour. She seemed to seize the pith of my discourse; but having no French, left the answer to her husband, a travelled man evidently, and of extreme courteousness, who wore large metal buttons on his coat, and a town beaver; and who in return complimented me on my family, and even hinted at my look of youth, which I thought a great stretch of politeness. I do not think I ever enjoyed a fine feast so much as I did our bowl of cream in the valley of Azun. The milk in the Pyrenees is delicious: the shepherds preserve it in wooden vessels, placed in reservoirs, simply constructed by means of a few stones, in a running stream; stone slabs are laid on the tops

of those vessels, and thus the milk is protected from the influence of the summer heat.

As we left Arrens, the peasants were pouring in for the evening service, and a colouring of seriousness was gently but obviously supplanting the gaiety of the morning. The evening prayer in the mountain valley, where piety is still a sincere and undivided feeling, where conviction supplies the place of eloquence, and awakens in others what it feels itself, is perhaps more persuasive in its primitive and gospel simplicity than when offered up amidst the pomp and gorgeousness of the 'house of gold,' or 'the palace of ivory.' Such was the worship of the early Christians, to whom sufferings and death were their purple and their crown: they had no gilded domes or carved altars, but, like their divine Master, went up into the mountain to pray; or descended into the caverns which nature offered to them, and which the presence of God made holy. Priests and people on the best gossiping terms: two reverends from another valley arrived just as we departed, each on his sleek mule, and each, like old John Wesley, with his small portmanteau behind him; nodding

at one side, good day-ing at the other, while some who had come earlier for the opening of the mission, mixed cordially with the old folks of the village.

I said nothing of the valley as we went up, because the sun had produced that equality of glare which effaces every thing. We had stopped at a village called Aucun, and going into the church, were followed by a crowd of children, who it was evident from the wonder expressed in their faces, conceived my sheet of green paper, which I had pinned at full stretch across my bonnet, to be part of myself. But they were as good-natured as the market-folks of Nay had been on a similar occasion, and altogether very orderly and civil little souls, who smothered their inclination to laugh till I had set them the example;—then, to be sure, they did give way! but grew grave immediately when I took it off, and they saw that I was only a woman in a bonnet, and that my green verandah did not sprout out of my forehead like the laurels of a tent-stitch Daphne. An old ferocious-looking sorceress, six feet high and black as Andromache, was disposed to be violent—furious indeed—at my being carried in a chair;



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One charming spot towards the middle of the valley, where the deep glen of the Bat de Bun (nothing in the morning, but ineffable in the yellow light) runs back into the hills, retarded us long. Let those who love nature stop here,—but it must be at the evening hour,—and look below on the windings of the Gave formed by the two streams that, descending—one from the green glen of Bun, the other from the Pic d'Azun—unite their waters at the foot of a bold and beautiful projection, that seems to fill up the centre of the valley. Looking back, (we saw it as we returned,) were the high mountains, then jasper-dark; below, the bright stream; above, the broad pastures—again park-like and exquisitely wooded with oak and other wide-spreading trees, which found their fellows in the hills where we stood looking at them, till the scene grew into our hearts, and made us almost wish to live in it. But the grange on its fairy platform, or the hamlet on its emerald ledge, has entire possession; the peasant enjoys it all; no dwelling that denotes inhabitants who are so from choice is visible, no châteaux except ruined ones; yet the road is good, and the country fruitful: "Un pays *complaisant*," as an old peasant who joined our

party said,—adding, "but Providence has not blessed it with mineral springs; so it is passed by."

This *passing by* often surprises me here: spots that might well excite the wish to live and die in them,—easily accessible ones too,—are left to those whose country calling binds them of necessity to their native valleys; but few or none dwell here for the sake of nature and her delightful works; none care to follow her into her mountains or her glens; none build cottages, or castles, or dwelling-places of any kind, in those fair spots which her loving eyes have rested on and blessed. I saw none such in the valley of Azun, I saw none in the sunny valley of Argelez,—the dismantled château of Despourrins, and the convent-house of St. Savin alone excepted;* none in the graceful basin of Luz, so beautifully approachable and inviting. The côteaux round Pau are thickly dotted; but once in the mountains,—though they are grottoes for coolness in summer, and their open vales warm and sheltered in winter, the liveable, enjoyable habitation seems altogether forgotten. Except in the small towns that hang about, there

* If there are others, they do not present themselves to the passing eye.

are few habitations visible that rise above the scale of the farm-house.

The valley of Azun is chiefly grass or pasture, but a little of every thing is cultivated; not a grange without its broad tree, or broader clump, scarcely one without its rapid brook. A tall female figure stood on the brink of one as we passed, her long dark mantle closed round, but not lifted, so that the folds were broad and free, falling in straight lines to the feet, like the robes of a Greek statue; her feet bare and visible, her face concealed, her stillness awful. But as we approached, the noise of our cavalry startled her, and turning half round, the gold cross upon her bosom caught the last sunbeam, and the heathen priestess became a Christian woman,—a peasant of the valley in her capuchon. O the magic of the evening lights! The ruins of the castle of Arras, no better than an old wall as we passed up, had darkened into a grey picture; and Arsizau, half bathed in light and half in shadow, made another, but more gloriously coloured. The valley of Argelez, beautiful in mezzotint as we descended, and the tower of Vidacoz, which seems to keep its key, whitening in the twilight.

Slept at Argelez — Hôtel du Commerce; an anti-pastoral name, but the landscape from our windows, and the lazy toil-up of the hay-carts dragged on laggingly by dozing oxen, and the farmer's boy whistling by the side of his cows as they wind along the road snuffing into the hedges, are as sweet an evening hymn as ever was chaunted by nun or poet. Supped on all sorts of birds; muriers as fat as ortolans, chevreuil, and a mutton *grille* that some of the party found delectable.

To see the valley of Azun, dine at Argelez, or even (quicker work) on a green lap in the valley, and return to Cauteretz before nightfall, is a long day's work: it may be trotted certainly, but not, I think, dwelt on. Best to halt for a day at our Hôtel du Commerce, either in going to or returning from the baths; in which ever direction the traveller's way lies in coming from the plains, whether towards Barèges, Cauteretz, or St. Sauveur, Argelez must be passed, and a day can scarcely be more sweetly spent, even in these prolific mountains.

CHAPTER V.

DEPARTURE FROM CAUTERETZ—THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER—RECOLLECTIONS AND TENDER ONES—LOURDES TO BAGNERES DE BIGORRE—MORE OVERLOOKING—BAGNERES DE BIGORRE—ITS ORIGIN, ASPECT, AND GENERAL EFFECT—ITS ATTRACTIONS—SHOWS AND SOUNDS—ARCADIAN HILLS—A CAMPAGNE—LA GIULIETTA—ROSSINI—THE TOP AND BOTTOM OF THE LADDER—

SEPTEMBER 1st. Came down from the mountains, leaving quiet little Cauteretz with regret. How silent are the fields on this great day of the partridge tragedy! I have not heard a single shot amidst the stubbles, or an echo from the hills. Happy birds! who have the good luck to live in the neighbourhood of such inactive sportsmen. Yet no where are field-sports more talked about than at Cauteretz, the display of shooting-jackets and fowling-pieces is prodigious; but Jean and Gabriel, the great hunters of the bear and izard, seem to have taken out an exclusive patent for killing.

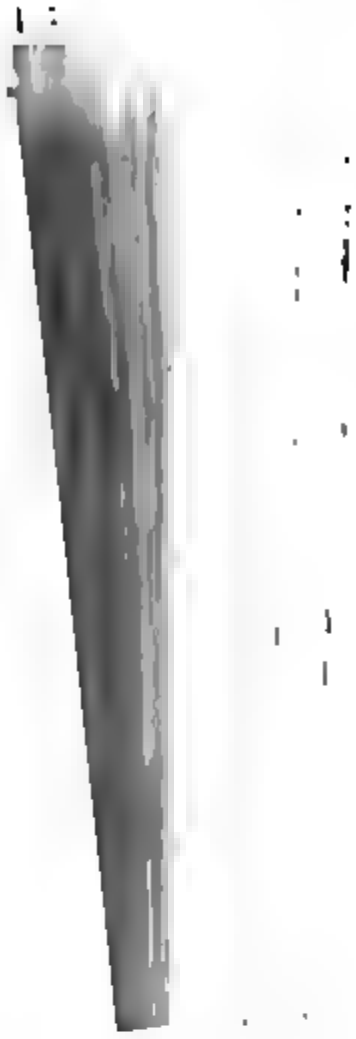
Yet though the sound is absent, and the sight too, still I cannot express how strongly the stubbles and the autumnal colouring of the air bring back to my mind the first of September of former times; the well-known call under the window at day-break, the gravel thrown up against it, the excited sportsman hurrying on his capacious jacket, the impatient dogs whining to be gone, the cold pie plunged into hastily, the bubbling coffee swallowed scalding hot, and the accompanying rusks crammed into the pocket. And then the stride through the turnip-fields or the wet grass—every blade a water-spout, and the return through the stubbles; the discharge of the fowling-piece as home is approached, and its echo in the woods; and the good luck or the ill-luck,—the emptying of the bag: if scantily filled, the dogs or the country sure to be in fault; if amply, part sent to the cook and part to the neighbour: and then the hot soup, the tender cutlet, the brisk fire,—perhaps the nap, on that evening decidedly allowable.

Dear days, but now long gone-by ones! yet present to my memory as if they were all yesterdays; present even to the colour of the air, and the sound of the returning footstep. But every

season, both of life and nature, has its own delights; and if the flowers of spring are bright, the fruits of autumn are not less delicious.

No post horses at Lourdes, so obliged to sleep there. Saturday evening, and vigorous sweeping before the doors, but the women slatternly. In France it is usually the reverse,—neat women, and dirty streets. After Lourdes, less interest; the mountain Prospero seems to have broken his wand, we are no longer in a land of enchantment; yet, while I say so, the common-place brightens into the agreeable, and we pass along a cultivated valley between two lines of hills hung about with oaks and chestnut groves, with a pleasant mixture of meadow and arable, and a rich reddish-brown soil giving tone to the whole. Descriptive painters rarely mention the colour of the soil, yet it helps or mars the effect of scenery prodigiously.

As we began to mount up a very steep ascent two leagues from Lourdes, our old cronies, the mountains, looked in upon us through a break in the hills—beautiful hills, asking for accordant habitations, which no one thinks of here, though the lawn is already sloped and the tree planted. But only, as I have already observed, for the shep-



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social home be our delight, still my wonder is that such spots should not induce the wish to live in them, or doing so, that the wish should not sometimes bring about the execution.

We arrived early at Bagnères de Bigorre, and dropped at once into an apartment already taken for us. Our windows look out upon a broad mall, (*le Coustous,*) shaded by lime trees, and bordered at each side by a row of very good-looking houses. This is the grand promenade of the town, the field of general display; on week days, it is lined with booths, which all disappear on Sunday to make way for those who prefer 'the human face divine,' to green lanes and singing birds. The *beau monde* have the first right of path,—or take it; and to-day have exercised their small-arms till the early dinner, or the lunch, or some other calling off, scattered their ranks and left the coast clear for the nurse-maids, who have their light artillery too, and know how to use it. In summer, the evening hour is of course the favourite and fashionable one, for the musquito shore (as I have heard from one who had the misfortune to be intimately acquainted with it) is scarcely so hot as Bagnères in the months of July and August.

September.—Without being either imposing or romantic, there is something charmingly fresh and placid in the position of Bagnères. This town has its page in the history of Bigorre. Its origin is doubtful: some would make it anterior, by six or seven hundred years, to the foundation of Rome; others cling to the Phocians, who, having colonized Marseilles, may have stepped over the hills and established themselves here; while others, again, are content to date it from the conquest of Aquitaine by the armies of Cæsar. It suffered severely in the wars of religion; and was stormed by Henri de Transtamarre on his entrance into Aquitaine, after his defeat at the famous battle of Najarra.* The Romans knew and used its springs, as some inscriptions still extant testify; it was praised by Du Bartas, and preferred for its baths above all other places of the same kind by Montaigne; since then Bagnères has lost nothing of its popularity. It reposes on a plain fertilized by many streams, handmaids to the Adour, which traverses it rapidly; and close behind rises a line of modest hills gracefully wooded, and gently de-

* "Batuille moult dure, grande, felonneuse, et horrible," Froissart says.

tached from a mountain ridge covered with tufted vegetation. It is a legitimate watering-place, presenting itself cheerfully, with several establishments for baths, and one that is quite magnificent; some narrow streets, and some wider ones, varied with open spaces; and often pretty, and even really handsome houses mixed up with gardens, trees, and snatches of green fields that give a pleasant country look to the town. Every lane has its Naid, almost every house its particular urn; distilling freshness, and greatly facilitating general cleanliness.

The bill of fare here has all the usual watering-place items: balls, plays five times a-week, a Frescati, occasional concerts, baths, gaming-tables (the old plague-spot,) a troop of spurious Franconis, and a menagerie conducted by a Pole, a distinguished *élève* of the illustrious Martin; who, like his great master, governs his monsters by his eye, subdues his tiger to timidity by a look, or by another provokes its fury; and while it chafes and fumes, jumps on its back, tears open its jaws, and exhibits its two rows of deadly teeth to the compamy. This poor man is vain of the love of his hyena!—perhaps it is the only thing that loves him; and to the

strong necessity of the heart, even this rude affection may be grateful.

The rolling of wheels being the ordinary street-thunder, one is surprised to find Bagnères—where at this late season it is but seldom heard, so noisy as it contrives to be. It is a harp, a horn, a bass viol, or all together: or the trumpets of the false Franconis riding about with their painted children, (always a melancholy sight); or the double drums of the menagerie, the cries of the hawkers, the screams of Polichinelle, the shouts and laughter of the delighted rabble, and the bells—the dismal bells, that sound at this moment as if they were tolling out souls, while perhaps only tolling in sinners, or idlers, to the afternoon prayers.

In my native town there was a church in a distant suburb, far from the spot which was my home, whose bells had a remarkable toll; and often have I sat at evening listening to its sound with wet eyes, when I was too young to know what the feeling was which caused the unusual moisture. I well remember the solemn boom—with the graves that are down in the earth and the spirits of heaven in it,—the deep single toll; and then the dead silence, and presently the toll again: and when

I hear, as I do now, a sound that recalls it, the same midnight feeling passes over my mind; and if I do not still shed tears, it is because I have outlived the age when tears are an indulgence.

Sweet walking in the hills here, and paths leading through the meadows from one farm-house to another, that might tempt the laziest footsteps to follow their green windings. The immediate neighbourhood of the town is very pleasing, full of woody nooks, silent as a summer's noon, except when the lazy trickle of some little rill breaks on the ear with its sweet but weak monotony. The road to les Bains de Salut is a favourite walk; there are hills that go along with it, and cottages scattered over their surface, peaceful and rustic as the happy dwelling of Baucis and Philemon. Our various denominations of hall, mansion, manor-house, lodge, box, &c., which perfectly define to an English ear the thing meant to be expressed, are not translateable into French, either by word or sign: the *ferme ornée*, though borrowed from its language, is rarely heard of; every thing of three stories high, if it has but a turret and an iron gate, (and often without either,) is a *château*, and every thing between that and a farm-house a *campagne*.

We strolled up to one this morning as we returned from the Salut, hearing that strangers were permitted to look round from the terrace. The dogs barked furiously as we made our entry, and so would the maids have done too, if they could: three of them dashed out on us like muzzled mastiffs; but as they said nothing, we ventured to sit down on a wall and look about us. The house (a few rooms tacked on to a barn) had not a flower or a bit of green about it; the garden was mere stubble. I could not help thinking of England; a hill and dale country is easily made beautiful, the difficulty is to spoil it. A little care, a little fresh grass, and some healthy flowers, and this spot would be charming, for it has trees and quiet, an agreeable quarter-deck walk, and the Arcadian hills in front; but it is not wild enough to be left altogether in wildness. One thing is good,—there is no attempt at decoration; the meagreness of neglect is bad, but the exuberance of ill-judged ornament is still more detrimental.

A joyous group sauntered along the road as we returned; one of the party laughed as if she was born to do nothing else, and all the time with such a melancholy look in her eyes: I was struck with

the contrast, which had something sad and unsettled in it. The gayest creature I ever saw once said to me, "Ah! if you knew but all!"

An unfortunate vocalist, "premier contr'alto du Théâtre de la Scala à Milan," (as the programme sets forth,) débuted here yesterday evening. Her husband came to borrow our hired piano for the occasion, and assured E—— that his wife had not only the finest voice in the world, but also "la plus belle méthode;" she had performed Giulietta thirty-seven times at Milan to enraptured audiences, and Tancredi at Paris; but of her success in that fastidious capital he made less positive mention. The report was, however, on the whole so favourable, that even I, who consider myself as fairly invalided, (at least for the time being,) and have long refused to my inclination the fine old-fashioned amusement of a play, was tempted by such alluring promises to trespass on my early hours; forgetting that a husband may not always be the fairest judge in such cases, and very naturally puffs his wife's talents in the hope of lining his doublet with something better than play-bills.*

La Giulietta was only to sing between the acts;

* Vide *Gil Blas.*

so we had to go through a vaudeville before she produced herself. At length she came—the Capulet of Milan, not of Verona; there was no mistaking it. Stone-blue muslin dress, edged with yellow; tinsel diadem; "taille forte comme les statues Grecques,"—altogether the counterpart of the *Lovely Betsy* of Philadelphia, or (gilt wig excepted) the *Providence* of Helvoetsluys, who sits at the head of their merchantmen, defying the elements. She, too, dashed off courageously, nothing intimidated by the presence of Rossini, who sat in the front of the stage-box, and assisted, with profound attention and inconceivable *sang froid*, at the martyrdom of some of his most beautiful creations. I think he applauded—at least he listened.

After an hour's random vocalizing, we settled into a regular opera, which the company contrived to bring to a close without possessing a single note amongst them: for the contr'alto had retired, probably to reap the laurel harvest of the green-room. The acting was indifferent; nothing of the rising genius and fine exuberance of the barn about it, and little of the learned observances of the theatre,—altogether a failure, not bad enough to be laughable, and too bad to give pleasure. We

had expected something better from an eccentric-looking man, that we had often met with in our rambles, and who seemed to have a twinkling of the spirit of comedy in his eye; but he was flatter than a dissected joke.

When an individual adopts a career, it is usually from necessity, the influence of advice, parental authority, or the obvious chance of success; but the stage seduces its votaries by the mere force of its intrinsic allurements, and is perhaps the only one which retains them by the same spell in defiance of natural defects, public disapprobation, and all the variety of wretchedness resulting from perpetual failure. The head and tail of a profession —be it what it may—always make strange contrasts; as the lord chancellor and the hedge attorney, the court physician and the village apothecary, the archbishop and the curate schoolmaster, the hero or fine gentleman of the stage and the man who plays mute in the back ground, or runs in between the acts to pick up the dagger or hurry off the chairs.

A great actor must be a rare combination of genius, judgment, taste, force, feeling, memory, and physical advantages; in such a one nature

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CHAPTER VI.

BAGNERES DE BIGORRE, CONTINUED—CHASSE AUX PALOMBES—AN AERIAL DWELLING—LES PALOMBIERES—AN ESCAPE—LANDSCAPE PAINTERS—LOOKING ONE THING, SEEING ANOTHER—THE ARTIST AND NO ARTIST—THE BEGGAR-MAN.

THE usual pic-nic, the usual ride, the usual calèche excursion, has each its turn here, as in other watering-places; but the amusement most in vogue is "la chasse aux palombes,"* which begins early in September, and is continued till the middle or end of November. There is not much excitement in the sport, if sport it may be called; but the spot is lovely, and every visitor at Bagnères rides up to enjoy the charming view, and take the chance of seeing some poor pigeons netted. The manner of alluring these shy birds is ingenious; a man hung up in the air in a basket fixed on the top of a long straight pole, sustained by two others placed against it in an oblique direc-

* Wild pigeons.

[illegible] watches the approach of his intended victims, and shakes them as they pass with a volley of small stones or rather bits of wood, which so frighten the poor things that they immediately lower their flight and drive down against the nets, the partition previously suspended from tree to tree to arrest their progress. Sometimes the birds fly high, as if well in instinct of danger, and so elude the enemy's vigilance: but oftener give into the snare, and - verging downwards, find the nets suddenly let open upon them by the pulling of a cord, the end of which is held by a man concealed in the adjoining brush-wood, who regulates the operations with the nice tact derived from constant practice.

The scene of action is a common fed by sheep, whose tinkling bells, prowling dogs, and childish shepherds, lying on the grass in their lazzaroni nightcaps of chocolate-coloured worsted, thrumming the jews-harp and gabbling their patois, are fitting live-stock for the rural fore-ground. From certain points on this common are views of great beauty; at one side a vast horizon, at the other deep vales and lofty mountains, confining the eye within their romantic boundaries; and beneath,

images of pastoral life in its peaceful security, cheerful labour, or poetic loneliness. I could not help wishing for a shed amongst the nets, to which I might run up now and then to pasture my fancy on the sweet food which nature has spread out so bountifully; instead of it, we have a magnificent beech, under whose shade we are now sitting on the watch for the pigeons, and yet pleased that they do not—like Mrs. Bond's dilly dillys—'come to be killed,' or caught, which amounts to the same thing; and wondering how the man in the basket can keep his head steady, up in the sky as he is. Three poles, or rather masts, firmly fixed in the earth in a triangular position and bound together at top, support the basket: by one of these its occupant, with the help of a studding of wooden pegs, ascends to his domicile, which appeared to me to sway backwards and forwards with every breath of air, and certainly looked as if the first—not gust, but zephyr, would fly away with it, though they tell us it is as firm as a castle.

After wondering how the man gets in, one wonders how he can keep himself from falling out; but there he sits, from early morning until dusk, keeping watch, sometimes without the slightest glimpse

of a bird, and always, I should think, with a full view of danger; but he, I suppose, thinks otherwise. For myself, were an alternative offered me and a choice imperative, I should prefer the Eddystone light-house to this perch in the air with the ground a hundred-feet below; for there one has some sort of a *terra firma*, though one may be stormed off, or starved on it; but to hang in the air, like a dead leaf at the mercy of every random blast, is a position to which no effort of reason could reconcile me. But these men make nothing of it, and sit in the clouds as the tragic muse does in her chair of state,* quite comfortably.

In the midst of this delightful solitude, for we had no companions but the man who watched his nets in the back-ground, and the shepherd-boys who lay upon the turf as if they were growing into it, we opened our basket; and establishing ourselves under the shade of the broad beech, ate our cold chicken and grapes with appetites which would almost have relished the black bread and onions of the Spanish shepherd. After our pleasant meal, we dawdled about from one point of

* Sir Joshua Reynolds' portrait of Mrs. Siddons as Melpomene.

view to another, guessing whereabouts Rousillion was, where Bayonne,—fancying we could almost see Toulouse, and wishing that our wishes were Durindana, and could open a second breach in the mountains just wide enough to lean over and look into Spain, as one might through a window.

As we descended towards the village of Gerd, a lady passed us on horseback, and a moment after was thrown with violence; but she recovered herself and rose up slowly, before we had time to give her any assistance. Poor soul! she looked very pale and frightened, but did not appear to have received any material injury, and had courage enough to remount her horse and rejoin her companions, after a very short interval. Her escape was almost miraculous; had there been the smallest fragment of rock, or even a loose stone on the spot, and few places here are without both, she must have been miserably mutilated, perhaps killed. This accident made me reflect gratefully on my own escape, under similar circumstances, on the summit of the Righi. How true it is that in the midst of life we are in death, and how many homilies there are in that single thought!

Returning home, we met an uncravated artist,

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should think, fail to call forth, if not create, that sentiment of reverence, that deep feeling of its infinite and ineffable beauty, which might at least prevent those who worship at the shrine from defacing the image.

A vague and tender melancholy, an imagination tinged with the spirit of romance, but pure and elevated; a love of simplicity, a mind that idealizes its objects,—wild beliefs, inexplicable fancies,—reveries indefinite, profound, intense; a religion of emotion, that beholds the eye in the heavens, and hears the voice in the winds; that opens the book of nature and meditates its divine page, seeing that the hand of God is on it; and when it thinks of heaven, looks upwards, beholds the daily miracle of light, and asks no farther. Such, it would seem, should be the tokens of a man who lives in daily and lone companionship with nature: but no, he only thinks of her as a lay figure, dresses her up in patches of green and patches of blue, pieces her summer robe with bleak, unfitting bits, brightens her grand and sombre winter one with yellow ochre, inundates her stern rocks with sunshine, her feathery palm, pale aloe, and heaven-seeking pine, with gloom; hardens his southern landscape by

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transmit, and, with minds full of poetry, produce only vulgar images; like our poor German, who seemed to understand nature, and to love her in her loneliness, and yet with what bleak meagreness of colouring and touch, and still more, with what an utter absence of apparent feeling did he represent the object of his worship!

Two hours ago I should have said, "there are no beggars at Bagnères;" but this morning, while I loitered about, waiting for my bath, a man—I will not say begged of me—but looked at me, and so piteously, that a parish catalogue of pauper-cases could not have said more than did his mournful aspect. He was obviously a stranger and afraid to ask, a forlorn vagrant from another land passing along in wretchedness: he was not old, nor yet maimed, nor even absolutely ragged; but I never saw any living creature look so desolate. A brassy hue, spotted and lifeless, seemed rather laid on his face than fed by the circulation of the life-blood; his eyes were livid, and with a look in them that one was ashamed to call wicked, because there was so much distress in it: but one of the girls at the baths, a handsome, heartless-seeming person, was not so scrupulous, and gave him the epithet of a

"bad vagabond." He might have once been so, but he was now only a wretched man; and when one thinks that this poor creature was once an innocent child, an infant nursed perhaps by a virtuous mother, fondled by an honest father, pressed to warm hearts that never murmured at any hardship that could bring good to the little one, the contrast becomes too touching, the fallen too pitiable, to leave room for a harsh thought, even though it might be a just one.

CHAPTER VII.

VALLEY OF CAMPAN—THE CONVENT OF MEDOUX—A FOUNTAIN AND A CLOISTER—MONKS AS THEY ARE, AND AS THEY WERE—VALUE OF CERTAIN PHRASES—THE PRIORY OF ST. PAUL—GENERAL ASPECT OF THE VALLEY—DEFECTS AND BEAUTIES—A SPIRITED POPULATION—THE BARREL-ORGAN—TARBES—ROAD BETWEEN BAGNERES AND TARBES—L'ELYSEE COTTIN.

THE regular Tempé of the Pyrenees is the valley of Campan. "O beautiful valley!" writes one; "O vale of Thessaly!" exclaims another; while a third likens it to the paradise of the blest; and a fourth, feeling the insufficiency of words, adores in silence.

Every day appeared to me an age till I too had worshipped in this elysium of the living, which opens its page of beauty at a short distance from Bagnères. Just at its entrance reposes the village of Asté, at the foot of the enamelled Heyris, the mountain of flowers, which in the summer months realizes the fabulous beauty of the fields of Enna:

there is no looking at it without thinking, if not talking, of Proserpine, and Dis's waggon, and other sweet poetical creeds that spring up at a touch out of the stores of memory. What a delicious frontispiece! thought I; but as I did not wish to squander admiration, but rather to hoard up for the great occasion, I said nothing.

Stopped at the opening of the valley to look at the fountain of Medoux, urgently recommended by guides to the notice of travellers. It beautifies the garden of what was once a convent of Capucins, now utilized into a saw-mill: the active virtues have superseded the meditative ones, and though evidences of past holiness still mildew on the walls of the refectory, manual labour has routed indolence, and piled up its implements within the cloisters.

The word *cloister* is apt to ally itself in the mind with thought of prayer and contemplation, and for the sake of this alliance, and the feeling of intense repose which it communicates, we often find ourselves disposed to overlook the evil tendencies of monastic institutions, their swarms of drones and heaps of human sacrifices. No doubt the wise and the devout are often habitants of these silent

dwellings; but how limited must be the power of usefulness, the benefit of example, when confined within the walls of a monastery; and how greatly do the labours of a parish-priest, who fulfils his mission worthily, rise in the scale when weighed against the passive or purely personal virtues of the monk. And yet, say what we will of monks, steep our imaginations as we may in the deepest dyes of cloisteral crime, craft, and turbulence, still there is something holy and imposing in the lives of many of the founders of monastic institutions, and in the self-sacrificing spirit of their immediate disciples, to which we look up with an "ingrained instinct of old reverence" not easily destroyed by later impressions. I say many, but by no means all; for there were some amongst them who were monks, only because they could not be kings. But those proud abbots, whose ambition outran the ambition of monarchs, as their influence did their power, who were lifted above their age by the force of superior knowledge, and above the reach of blame by the mute subjection of the multitude, are less imposing at this distance of time in their odour of arrogant domination, than the anchoret in his spirit of sweet and humble piety. Even at the

heart,—for, being human,
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of the devout Benedict, the
holy Francis; and the so
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Minims and Benedictines,
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the winds of the desert. Praise be to them for their love of letters, and their love of nature; the last witnessed by the delicious sites on which their monasteries are placed, the first proved by irrefutable vouchers. If they beg in the hamlets, there are yet some who exercise the virtue of hospitality in the frozen wilderness: all must wish a pious permanency to the Benedictines of Mont St. Bernard,—and to such others as have chosen the desert—traversed in danger—as their dwelling-place, that they may fully exercise the power of usefulness, which is charity.

This convent of Medoux is not precisely a situation to be adduced in confirmation of the high picturesque taste of the monks; but it is quiet and flowery, with a soft, meadowy beauty and fine hills about it, and fresh streams flying round the house and through it, and probably—as every thing must have its wrong side—damp walls, and legions of rats. The convent was suppressed at the Revolution, and is now inhabited, as our guide informed us, " par cinq ou six de ces messieurs." I did not inquire who they were, being occupied in reflecting on the advantages and uses of the phrase " ces messieurs." Instead of the circuitous ex-

planation, which is with us the usual consequence of a thoughtless question, "ces messieurs" steps in, cutting short tedious details, economizing words and time, and sparing the useless enumeration of Mr. such-a-one and his son, or his wife's brother-in-law, or his sister's nephew, and so on. *Monsieur*, too, is invaluable; what an agreeable change from "my master," or "your master," (though the first has something faithful and revering in its sound when pronounced by an old servant,) and the respectful but not demeaning "monsieur." What an improvement it would be on the my lord duke or Sir Harry air, with which our London domestics call their *employers* "Mr. A." or "Mr. B." The pity is that we cannot put *sir* into the third person.

"O fountain! when in you shall I
Myself, eas'd of unpleasing thoughts, espy?"

I do not know why Cowley's quaint lines came into my head, when I found myself at the fountain of Medoux, for I certainly felt more disposed towards the indulgence of pleasant, than of anxious fancies; yet so it was. The fountain is a very clear pool, fed by a gush of swift water of ample

volume, but not a prettier one than many of the wood-side pools in which our cows love to luxuriate; limpid however as Arethusa, or perhaps Helicon; with a raw summer-house close to it, and a prodigious chestnut—that is, a chestnut of prodigious height, with a crown of foliage like a real date tree, and no lateral branches. The gardener said it had grown so; but it looked to me pared and unnatural, something in the way of a *mat de cocagne*—a spoil-all of a thought; and so, instead of spicy groves, bulbuls, gilt lattices, and other delicate oriental images which its form might have called up, came the garland of prize toys, with its train of town-holiday associations.

At Medoux the valley opens with a calm and gracious aspect, which it preserves throughout the whole of its extent. Soon after the Prieuré of St. Paul presents itself on a mound, tucked in by a cold wall and a treble row of poplars. The priory of St. Paul! the very name has a whole page of pious story in it,—a hermitage in the wild, or at least a grey monastery grown old on the brink of a glassy lake, and nodding over its clear still waters; with rooks cawing in the ruined belfries, and colonizing the venerable grove, once the echo of holy

sound, but now of their rude *angelus*. But it neither resembles the lonely hermitage, nor yet the ivied ruin; it is a pretty-looking house, in a charming position, outwardly spoiled by the aforesaid bastion wall and cold poplars,—indeed wanting nothing but painted port-holes and wooden guns, to make it (as seen from the road) just such a concern as sometimes shows itself in the suburbs of a sea-port town, and to which its owner fondly gives the name of Gibraltar, or Saragossa, or some other place eminent in the annals of war.

It has, however, a reputation that reached us at Paris, and a view that merits—if not all, at least half that is said of it; perhaps more. A charming look into a glen, from one of the drawing-room windows, greatly took my fancy; there are other striking points, but not much table-ground,—the house, indeed, stands on a mere bracket. It might be made an excellent one, and I believe without much expense; and a little pains tastefully taken, would convert the whole into a charming summer residence, airy and shaded as a bird's nest. It belongs to an English family, who have not visited it (as its neglected appearance denotes) for many years; and who would willingly, their farmer told us, either

sell, or let it. I was national enough to hear with pleasure that they were not the planters of the poplars.

The valley of Campan may be called the valley of the thousand streams, and its abundant sources are so adroitly managed, that every root of grass seems moistened like a precious flower; the result is a freshness that becomes a feeling, and renews the mind. At one side a long rocky rampart, thinly and partially greened, guards the valley; at the other, swelling hills oppose the living verdure of their rich pastures, their pleasant cabins shaded by broad trees, their Arcadian beauty, life, and vigour, to the stony stillness or decrepid vegetation of their opposite neighbours. The splendid colouring of these emerald hills, gently detached from each other by glens darkly and richly tinted, that look like the avenues to more mysterious regions, the atmosphere of happiness which surrounds the dwellings, the wealth of pastoral and agricultural life thrown about full handed, dilate the heart. It is a morally beautiful country; for in its velvet meadows, its fine unshorn trees, and plains fertilized by the skilful management of many rills into a germinating freshness that might

pointed.

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and other brook-becoming things. There are no dark far-off stretches, or unexpected developements of beauty; no beckoning gloom into which imagination enters with hushed breath; you see it at once: the road ascends, but so inobviously, that as you go along it seems flat; it passes through the villages of Beaudéan and Sainte Marie, and the flourishing bourg of Campan which lies between them, hitching a tag of town-feeling on the pastoral.

There is unquestionably something very gracious and beautiful in the form of the hill sides, and in their smoothly-rounded outlines; yet (I speak with diffidence of a thing so vaunted) it appeared to me inferior to its immense reputation. It is a kind, unworried nature—rich, redolent, and peaceful; remarkable for its abundant population, and the sweet home-looking habitations that cluster on its gentle declivities, leaving no spot without its shaded dwelling and green domain,—green literally as an emerald; but I doubt if it would repay a very distant pilgrimage, (the world's end has been talked of); and I doubt, too, if in the lateral valleys some spots may not be found on which the vagrant fancy, the loving thought, might settle with more

delight, than even on the swelling valley of Campan.

The great charm of this valley (at least to my eyes) is its look of youth, vigour, and present happiness. There are many valleys here fresh, bright, and dewy; but this is steeped in such day-break tints, that to an eye accustomed to an antique and decaying nature, to the crumbling mountain in which the principle of destruction alone seems active, or stern rock whose impenetrable surface repels vegetation, it appears like something new-born, that has yet the whole of its long and prolific course to run: it carries the mind forward into a bright futurity, while valleys encumbered by huge masses of granite, with which the fall of some traditional mountain has choked their issues, announce the dissolution of nature, and turn thought into a more sombre channel.

The inhabitants are perhaps as remarkable as their valley; they are robust and handsome: some of the women appeared to us strikingly so, with fine-drawn features and magnificent eyes. Their air of gaiety amounts to boldness, their animal spirits seem to encumber them, and they throw off the superfluity into the first channel that presents

itself, sometimes giving way in the high tide of their merriment to a violence of voice and gesture, which, with a little pushing, might spell itself wrath. They are reputed hospitable, frank, and generous —qualities on which passionate people usually pride themselves; fine qualities, certainly, and delightful ones, only too often conceived to be a sufficient atonement for the "precious balms which break the head." The *spirit*, as it is called, that knocks down with one hand and applies the poultice with the other, is one which the hard-working classes of society—especially the women, usually wish to possess, and greatly admire. I have heard more than one person thank their stars that they had a *spirit*, considering it not only as a good defensive armour, but as, somehow or other, synonymous with a heart. I should think it was universally admired in the valley of Campan, where the antique character of the peasant of Bigorre is said to be preserved in its freshness, with the venerable green still upon it.

That they are a happy people every thing attests, and this very happiness includes the probability of their being a virtuous one; for disorder once introduced amongst the labouring classes, is quickly

followed by its inevitable consequences,—want and wretchedness. But it is impossible to pass through their villages on a holiday, when the population is at large and unoccupied, without being struck by the air of bold mirth, of decided *insouciance* of which I have spoken, and which is too general not to be characteristic. Though reputed generous, they are not insensible to the charms of wealth, and, when the times permit, have the custom of passing annually into Spain to assist in the harvest labours; but since the coming of the cholera, that source of gain has been closed up, and their industry limited to the tardier harvest of their own fields.

Tuesday. A barrel-organ under the windows, (the first that we have heard in the Pyrenees,) playing the *Pescatore*, a bit of Rossini, and then *God Save the King* for the absentees. I know few persons who are not affected—more or less, by hearing a familiar air played by a barrel-organ: when a melody is sufficiently popular to make its way to this street instrument, it is generally sure to be *real* music, and music too with a crowd of recollections in it. Besides, attention not being directed from the sound to the merits or demerits

of the performance, the strength of the feeling is increased by its singleness, and an effect not unfrequently produced upon the mind, which the scantiness of the means employed scarcely seems to account for.

I remember once hearing an odd kind of man say, that when he was in a foreign land, nothing made him so melancholy as the music of a barrel-organ. I thought the emotion natural: no doubt, the sound of this simple instrument had awakened feelings of home-tenderness, remembrances of fire-side enjoyment, fond household thoughts, (always melancholy ones when the hearth is far away,) that, gaining at once the mastery over newer sensations, turned gaiety into sadness. I knew the feeling, and entered into it; but I had made a wrong guess. He could not bear to hear it, he said. And why? because that in winter it made him think of oyster-shops, fresh lobsters, and Drury Lane; in summer, of Piccadilly, the Brighton coaches, Grange's ice-shop, and the Haymarket. But after all, though the objects of his sad remembrances seemed to me singular ones, yet the ground-work was still the home feeling,—a porter-pot and stage-coach feeling,

perhaps, but native as the heart-imbued images which more delicately constructed minds work into the same canvas.

The good people of the mountains talk of Tarbes, as the inhabitants of the small towns within fifteen miles of London do of that land monster. It is the capital of the Hautes, and Pau of the Basses Pyrénées; but it is not so fair or so engaging—at least to my mind, as its loftier sister; indeed we thought it rather a watery-looking place, as we drove yesterday through its empty streets; however, we are told that it is considered as so attractive, that strangers who only meant to pass through it, often remain to live. It is something (indeed a great deal) to have the wide and majestic screen of the Pyrenees always drawn out before one in its prodigious power and beauty, even though the immediate garnishing may be—as it seemed to us—insipid; and perhaps one should not ask for more than quiet and fertility in the neighbourhood of so much splendour; both are found here, and there is certainly no place from which the glorious mountains are seen to more advantage. The houses have a half-mourning air, from the general

use made of grey and black in their exterior decorations; but they, like the streets, are prepossessingly clean, and watered, like a Swiss town, with running streams that, as in Froissart's time, are "aussi cleres, comme belle eaue de fontaine." It has, moreover, a Prado and a Place Maubourquet, shaded by fine old trees, broad branched and stately; and a Place Marcadieu, of great extent, where a market of very attractive reputation is held every fifteen days. It is said to be one of the most stirring and commercial in France, and is remarkable for the variety of people and costumes which it brings together,—Spaniards, Basques, Béarnois, Bigorrais, presenting a curious and original *coup d'œil*, and making a pleasant picture of the Marcadieu, which in its nakedness of yesterday looked particularly raw and glaring.

Tarbes piques itself on an origin, lost in the night of time. It was the Bigorra of Cæsar, and the Turba of the later Romans. After having been devasted alternately by all "the harnessed millions of the north," sacked by the army of Abderamen, pillaged by the Normans, stormed and plundered again and again in the civil and religious wars of the sixteenth century, and condemned to a return

of all the calamities which its unswerving adherence to orthodox Catholicism had brought down upon it in the time of the Visigoths, it is now a picture of peace, and looks as if it had never heard the sound of drum or trumpet. It has a public library (we are told), but no shows. The inhabitants are said to be sociably inclined, and to cultivate music with considerable success.

On the road from Bagnères to Tarbes, and not very far from the latter place, is the Château d'Odos, where Margaret de Valois died in 1549. Not the Margaret of whom le bon Henri

> " Fut pendant plus d'une année
> Le très affligé mari,"

but the Margaret—queen too of Navarre—whose name has been made familiar to our memories, by her Boccaccio tales and love of literature.

This road is not among the fine things here; but it is very agreeable, and remarkable for the number of villages (eight, I believe,) through which it passes in the space of five leagues. There is a pleasant air of country comfort about the people and their habitations; and the fashion, almost general in the Pyrenees, of framing round the doors and windows with stone or marble, gives a neat

appearance to the cottages, as the snug dress does a decent one to the people. We saw it in an advantageous moment, when the birds were singing, and the sun shining, and the women all at work busy and bustling,—thrashing, winnowing, dibbling, stacking, and quite as active as farmers' men. It is true they work for themselves, and interest quickens industry not a little; the peasants are all small proprietors, who make the most of their limited domains, mow their grass twice or thrice a-year, carry their crops home on their heads, cultivate maize, live upon it, and contrive to be as fine a people on this vegetable diet, as any beef eaters that I know of.

Tarbes is the winter retreat of many of the proprietors of Cauteretz. It is a préfecture, (which among its advantages includes a reception at least once a-week,) possesses a regular theatre—I think we were told, and what our informer called more town-resources than Bagnères,—meaning perhaps markets, or stationary society. Living at Bagnères is good and reasonable; nor did we find any cause to complain of Cauteretz, though farther removed from the facilities of luxury. The izard is dressed there in perfection, and the trout of the Lac de

Gaube has few rivals; but the minnows of the brook, with whose qualities one is unluckily more familiar, are mean eating.

L'Elysée Cottin has something affected in its sound, though not in its sight: it is but a short distance from Bagnères, yet an out-of-the-world sort of thing notwithstanding. We passed half the morning wandering by its wild brook, and sitting under the spreading shade of the tree in the deep hollow,—the hollow beneath the beautiful hill, fresh as spring, and silent as the grove. It may have been here, in the shadow of her favourite tree,* that she, who has given her name to this solitude, drew out from the obscurity to which modesty had consigned it, that most perfect image of filial piety, the courageous and devoted Elizabeth; the Russian girl with the Roman heart,—or better than the Roman, the tender, glowing, self-sacrificing, and unswervable one of the Christian martyr. It may have been, while looking on these objects, that she traced the log-hut by the Arctic lake, and the pilgrimage through the frozen desert, —at least one loves to think so: it makes the air seem purer.

* Since (I have heard) cut down.

Perhaps this gentle spirit, for such it appears that she really was, offered in her moral construction one of the most singular enigmas ever presented to the observer of the human mind. Cited as a model of virtue, she has left behind her pages which we dare not put into the hands of our daughters; and with the heart of an angel (as those who knew her say) and the most scrupulous delicacy of conduct, blushed not to have imagined and indited scenes, from which minds virtuously organized turn away in disgust. Madame Cottin has described the abnegation of self, the heroic enthusiasm of filial love, the pure, yet passionate devotedness of a new heart, in all their vital freshness. It is from sympathy alone that such tints are extracted; but in what blotted corner of the same mind did she find the sombre and licentious colouring with which a portion of her works, eminent in some parts for purity and moral feeling, are so lamentably imbued?

CHAPTER VIII.

BEAUTY NOT ALWAYS RELISHED—THE HORN OF ORLANDO—PENE DE L'HEYRIS—THE TUFT OF GENTIAN—THE OLD SHEPHERD—ASTE—ITS RUINS—ROYAL FEELINGS TENDERLY USED—THE CAGOTS—WHO WERE THEY?—CONJECTURES—THEIR WRETCHEDNESS AND PATIENCE.

I ONCE happened to sit at the table d'hôte at Berne next to an Englishman, who, when some one mentioned the passage of the Gemmi, muttered to his friend, "I hope we are not going to hear any more about the beauties of nature: I wish people would talk of something else,—always the same subject, and one is so sick of it."

In the mountain Pyrenees this poor man would have died of repletion, for here is nothing but nature. No palaces, no temples, no cathedrals,—Saxon, Gothic, or Morescan; no Roman ruins, (though some slight memorials,) no fragments of Arab or Byzantine architecture: now and then a church with the Templars' mark upon it, or a tower with the feodal one; but no monuments of art, no

great and general records. Home ones indeed there are, of high and honourable interest to the children of the land, and fine instances of individual heroism and noble-mindedness, which contemporary admiration has made historical. But the country of the Pyrenees (taken in its ancient extension) is not one remarkable as the scene of great and generally influential events; it has not made for itself a lofty and distinct position in history, it is not vital with mighty recollections, like some mountain countries which at once recur to the mind, nor full of antique associations,—close, identical, and fixed to the very spot by still extant memorials that serve at once for history and picture, like others; but appears to have been most remarkable as the road traversed by Romans, Carthaginians, Goths, Visigoths, Franks, and Saracens, when they passed onwards to their various destinies. I speak of the French Pyrenees, the mountains themselves: not of Roncevallos, which stands at the Spanish side, and singly (as I am told) as a high historical memorial; nor of fierce Arragon, Navarre, Béarn, Foix, Acquitaine, or any of those countries that lie at the feet of the great chain, and now form, under new denominations, its large de-

partments; nor of the ancient cities in the plains, —Perpignan and others, which now call themselves cities of the Pyrenees; but of the mountains alone, and their inkernelled valleys.

It is true, that the demi-fabulous traditions of Charlemagne's exploits between the Ebro and the Pyrenees, and the march of the mighty monarch and his paladins, remain with it as poetry: the name of Orlando has, with the help of Turpin and Ariosto, sanctified many of its scenes. That knight of knights, he of the fleet horse, the strong sword, and the burning heart, expired within the shadow of its mountains, leaving the magic of his name and story behind him; and the echo of the last blast, the dying one, which burst his magic horn, to sound still upon the ear of fancy,—fancy that willingly takes in all the romance yet extant in the legends of the Pyrenees with the fond credulity that turns away from reason.

Religious persecutions have stained this beautiful earth; internal feuds, and unequal strifes between the native chieftains (often wise governors and brave men) and the more potent rulers of the land, crowd its annals; but to the passing traveller its interest is in its exceeding beauty, the sweet-

ness of its climate, and the pleasant qualities of its inhabitants. To hearts in which the voice of nature always finds an echo, the Pyrenees offer treasures. I would say something of the Péne* de l'Heyris, to which we mounted up yesterday, of our halts under the broad shade of the beech or the fir, of the wild glens down below and the many tier of mountains up above, falling back, line behind line, until they grow skyey and melt into the heavens, but that it is such a thousand times told tale. We talk of trees and streams, of the wild hill and silent valley with fondness, with delight, vainly imagining that we have set them out in all the various lights and shades in which we have ourselves admired their loveliness. But no: there they stand like a file of musketeers, each one the duplicate of its neighbour. It is not the fault of nature, for imagination cannot compass her infinite variety,—is there a tint that does not glisten in the fields of her robe? is there a flower that does not bloom in her garland? is not the light of heaven in her eye, and all its changeful beauty, in her aspect?—but it is ours, who cannot translate it all into words.

* Péne—*summit*, in the language of the country.

The ascent to the Péne de l'Heyris is by the pantières; the nets were up, and the sentinel on guard in his basket,—but no birds. This has been a bad season, too sunny, too constantly fine; a grey day, or a foggy one, is usually chosen by the pigeons for their migrations, and we have had a month of September (to-day the 22nd) almost without a cloud. From the summit of the Heyris grand and beautiful things are visible; parts of Languedoc and the old Guienne, Mont Perdu, the high and mighty Maladetta, and, stretching eastward, the Canigou of Roussillon. So said the peasant who served us as guide, adding with a decisive wave of the hand, "Ils y sont tous;" but being a man rather of general knowledge than minute information, he declined entering into particulars, and left us to guess out things as we could.

The flowers of the mountains, the rare ones that in the gay summer time cover the turf with "quaint enamell'd eyes," were all gone, and the close sward had only the common complement of daisies. I love flowers every where, dearly love them; but the brightest garden ones, spreading their living freshness over a soft summer mountain, charm my fancy less delightfully than the sight of

a tuft of gentian, blowing amidst the rigours of a higher region, and making enamoured fellowship with its unchangeable austerities. It tells one such a sweet story—that beautiful gentian of the desert! deepening, brightening, strengthening in the keen air, that has just blown off the snow from its sweet blossoms; friends with ice, friends with wind, friends with the cold rain which, congealing on its azure leaves, covers them with fanciful concretions. Even the hardy rhododendron, that loves to carpet the high steep with its lavish blossoms, stops short of the frozen desert, which the skyey gentian decorates preferringly, though wandering sometimes from its lofty summit down to the nearer solitude, and opening its blue eyes among daisies and meadow-sweet, which have clambered up out of their low warm haunts to give it a meeting.

In the heart of the narrow valleys through which we descended, is the cabin of a herdsman, who goes up to the hills in the first week of June with his cattle, the combined property of the inhabitants of his village; and remains there until the last week in September, or later if the season admit. He supplied us with fresh milk of most delicious flavour, served in a bright skillet, with a

wooden ladle floating as usual on its surface; a most opportune refreshment, as the wine which we had brought with us had been spilt on the road. The chairmen, wiser than we are, avoid all chance of cracked bottles, and confine their sour beverage to a capacious skin, out of which they drink, after the Spanish fashion, without suffering the pipe through which the liquor passes, to touch their lips.

Our shepherd (an old man) rubbed his hands in delight, when he talked of next Friday as the day fixed for his return to the plains; exclaiming, with the concentrated egotism of age fastening eagerly on its last enjoyment,—"Ah, then I shall sleep again upon a mattress!" It was obviously the thought of his mattress,—not of his family, that stirred up his heart; not but his bed of straw was comfortable (he said) and wholesome, and he had an excellent *linceul** to cover himself with. A gay idea, enough to keep one waking of a winter's night, or a summer's one either; but a wedding garment could not have sat more lightly on the shepherd, whose mind was still in its bud,—thinly filled, but fresh as the kernel of a young filbert,

* Literally, a winding-sheet.

except in the single instance of tenacious caducity with which he clung to his mattress.

For six-and-twenty summers this same shepherd had been chosen by the commune as their regular Palemon, but this year he had feared that his age would have been against him. However, he had the good fortune to be once more appointed to the important function "Let us have the old shepherd," said the mayor: and the "I, even I Artaxerxes the king," was not expressed with more pride than he seemed to feel in repeating the words of his village magistrate. Yet this much-ambitioned honour has nothing that seems very inviting about it, for the pay is poor and the life comfortless;—a bed of straw, a mess of maize, out gathering in the cattle till nine at night, then up again at two; and in case of sudden illness, none to help the sick or shrive the dying. Sick, however, he never was, our shepherd said, though sometimes frightened, when the wolves came down upon him, as happened now and then in the teeth of his vigilance.

I have seldom seen a head more prosaically organized than this old man's; yet the vanity which mountaineers always feel about their mountains, took something like the shape of poetry

when he talked of L'Heyris in its season of flowers, lamenting, almost pathetically, our not having seen it in its beauty. "Ah! (said he,) you would never have forgotten it: it would have staid with you for ever."

Just as the sun was setting, we found ourselves in the village of Asté, wondering at the exquisite verdure of the meadows which, after three months without three days of rain, dazzles the eye, and inhaling the aroma of the box-hedges,—a common odour in the Pyrenees, and a pleasant one. As we stopped to repose, a woman approached my chair with a sort of town sweep, that showed she was not a peasant of Asté; she wished to have told me that there was something that had once belonged to the Grammonts to be seen there, better worth looking at than any thing in "ce pauvre village," as she added in a low tone of confiding scorn; but she had been too long away from the city of her joy (Toulouse, I think,) to have preserved her vernacular tongue intact, and I was dull enough not to discover, through the patois with which it was encrusted, that the castle (a ruin now) to which she was so anxious to attract our notice, had been the abode of Corisande (or Diane, as she is sometimes called,) d'Andouins,

when the *vert gallant* vowed that faith to her, which had been pledged to so many,—from the tender and faithful Fleurette of the bowers of Nerac, to the politic and ambitious Marquise de Verneuil. This weak part of their hero's character is swallowed as a sort of a virtue by the good people hereabouts, just as we, in the same feeling, take to our bosoms the legend of Fair Rosamond, or the true history of Shore's wife.

Asté is an agreeable village in a sweet position, but with an under-population of goîtrous throats and idiotic faces painfully demonstrative. There was a poor soul, a boy, with the genuine fool's coat, all of a size from top to bottom, buttoned behind, and a bit of red rag in his cap, who amused himself by dipping first one foot and then the other in a pool of dirty water. A jeering girl laughed at him, and poor Motley responded to her mirth with a galvanic grin; the jaw opening as on a hinge, and snapping back again into its position like a spring-lock. The barrenness of utter idiotism is less painful to the heart than this faint, sad show of answering intelligence; but a woman near me said he was happy—happier much than she was.

This boy was not a cagot, but simply a crétin, (the names are often applied indiscriminately,) a

being deprived of the faculty of reason, and but faintly endowed with that of instinct. The real cagot is rarely seen in the social haunts of man: the small remains of this mysterious race, unaccounted for in the history of nations or of people, though no longer exposed to the barbarous persecutions of their fellow-beings, are still strangers to their hearths, and aliens from their intimate communion. They can, it is true, enter a church at its great gate,* and kneel down with others at the altar; if they cannot pay for shoes, they need not wear them, and are no longer obliged to bear the badge of their ignominy (the foot of a goose) upon their garments. But the cagot, like the pariah, has still his home in the desert, where he dwells with others of his long-proscribed race. No other smoke mixes with that which rises from his humble cabin; no other hand presses his in amity. Debased by persecution until the traces of his human nature have been nearly effaced from his pale and stupified countenance, and almost, if that countenance may be allowed to testify truly, from

* Formerly the cagots were only allowed to enter by a small side-door, through which contaminated aperture no others ever passed; and were forbidden to go barefooted, lest the stones which they had trodden on should be infected by the contact.

his mind also; condemned to perpetuate hereditary taints, hereditary deformities, created by persecution and made innate by ages of misery, and by the concentration within its own limited channel of that blood with which no other blood would mingle, it is no wonder that the cagot should have become mentally and physically degraded below the common standard of humanity.

Who were the cagots originally? and what was the terrible crime,—perhaps misfortune, which put them under the ban? By what right were they cut off from all communication with their species, sold, bequeathed? walled out like lepers, forbidden to pray with other men, denied the rights of Christian sepulture? and yet, as it seems, for no evidence exists to the contrary, untainted by any contagious malady, and if ever rebels against the Christian faith, no longer so, but Catholics like their persecutors,* when in the earlier periods of

* The cagots were known to be Christians in the year 1000, as is proved by ancient writings mentioned by Marca, and there is every reason to suppose had long been so, even if they had ever been otherwise. Marca also refutes the idea (once general) of their being tainted with leprosy, quoting the opinion of certain learned physicians employed to ascertain the truth or falsehood of the imputation, and who pronounced them of healthy race, "forte, vigoureuse, et pleine de santé."

the middle ages we find them noticed as a race apart, an undesignated race, existing in a state of reprobation, the cause of which was, like their origin, involved in darkness. Were they, as Ramond supposes, a remnant of the Goths paled out from all communication with those who had been outraged by their cruelty? Were they Jews, or Arians, or Saracens fallen into the hands of their conquerors? There exists no record of their first coming; they did not appear at different, though not distant periods, like the tribe now known all over Europe by the various names of Bohemian, Tzingani, Zingari, Zinguener, Gitano, Cygana, or Gipsy:* they had not, like that mysterious race, a language, a complexion, a physiognomy, obviously and entirely foreign and peculiar to themselves; they had no traditions, no remnants of ancient customs, nor has any record come down to us of the crime, whether against God or man, for which they have been so horribly punished.

According to some old writers, the cagots were a tribe of Goths banished from Spain as an infected

* In Germany, the first appearance of the people whom we call Gipsies was (according to Sir Thomas Brown) in the year 1400; in Switzerland they were seen in 1422; in Italy in the same year; in France in 1427. (See Harriot's *Observations on the Oriental Origin of the Romnichal.*)

race, in which some terrible malady had become hereditary. Belleforét believes them to be the descendants of the Visigoths, defeated by Clovis in the terrible battle of Vouillé, when Alaric was slain and his army annihilated; and those who follow this opinion, derive the name of cagots from Caas Goths—Chiens de Goths. I have read, that in ancient acts they were called *Chrétiens Gezetains*, which name Marca supposes was given them from Gieza,* a leper punished by the prophet Elisha for false dealing. The same learned historian considers this miserable race to be a remnant of the Saracens who, called into Spain by Count Julien to avenge the dishonour of his daughter Florida, subdued the country, and from thence carried their victorious arms into France: but being defeated with tremendous slaughter between Tours and Poitiers by Charles Martel, fled into the mountains of the Pyrenees; where, degraded below the standard of humanity by the cruelty of their conquerors, they were suffered to exist as living expiations of an audacious act, to which ill success had given the character of an atrocious one. In support of this

* In our translation, Gehazi,—the servant of Elisha, to whom and to his race the leprosy of Naaman, the Syrian captain of the king's host, was destined (as a punishment for his avarice and falsehood) to cleave for ever.—2 Kings, ch. v.

opinion, it is said that the plain between Tarbes and Lourdes, called the Lanne Maurinne, or Lande des Maures, takes its name from a desperate battle fought there in the early part of the eighth century, between the fugitive remains of the Saracen army and the people of the country, who, commanded by their chief Meselin, rose up against and destroyed them. The tradition adds, that the few who escaped, finding all the passes into Spain closed against them, abjured Mahometanism, and giving themselves up to inevitable degradation, became (as some believe) the root of this unfortunate race.

Some remains of the cagots are said still to exist in Guienne, and also in Britanny and Navarre, as well as in the Pyrenees; but every where they have been the victims of the same frightful persecutions. When Ramond visited the mountains in 1787, something of compassion had begun to mingle with the feeling of horror which they had so long inspired; but this charitable sentiment had come too late to be of much comfort to these unhappy creatures. Goîtres, and the peculiar paleness and abasement of countenance which indicates the disposition to crétinism, or its existence, had, as I have already observed, become hereditary among them; and served to prolong that feeling

of alienation which still existed, though in a less inveterate form, towards this outcast tribe. The small door through which alone they had been for ages permitted to enter a church, was, it is true, walled up; they might work, and buy, and be taken to their graves like other people; but no one would intermarry with them, and their dwellings were still apart from the habitations of other men. At present their existence seems altogether forgotten, indeed so entirely, that many consider the race as extinct; and all whom I have questioned on the subject have either been of that opinion, or at most answered doubtingly, with a vague idea that there might be still a remnant existing in some remote valley, but without any thing like certainty.

Indeed, the subject has long ceased to excite either interest or curiosity, and yet it is well calculated to awaken both,—curiosity, by the story of a people, of whose origin neither contemporary record or preserved tradition makes mention; a people publicly persecuted as if for some unimaginable crime, yet not a notice extant—written or remembered—of its nature or commission; and interest, by the fate of this same wretched caste—a bruised and trampled-on race of fellow-creatures,

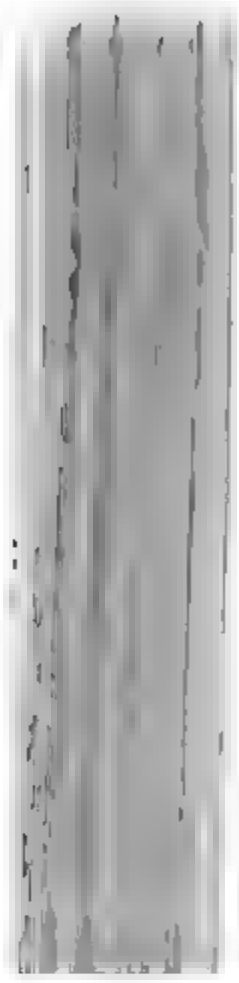
in whom even the brute abjectness, the utter abasement to which injustice had reduced them, could not extinguish the sentiment of affection, or weaken the power or permanence of those tender and domestic feelings which Ramond, who visited their huts, so touchingly and beautifully describes in a passage often quoted; where, alluding to the dim retreats in which they were used to hide themselves, he says, "J'y ai trouvé des frères qui s'aimoient avec cette tendresse, qui est un besoin plus pressant chez les hommes isolés. J'y ai vu des femmes, dont l'amour avait quelque chose de soumis et de dévoué, qu' inspirent la faiblesse et le malheur." Poor wretches! how touching it is to see this first, last, sweetest feeling of the heart lingering still within it, when all other human ones have been nearly trampled out of their sanctuary. And what a lesson to those who curse Providence in the impious rage of disappointed vanity, is the cagot's patient maintenance of religious faith, his pious observance of religious duties, his unshaken trust in God's promises! For him the iron chain, which he has worn on earth, becomes a golden one, as joining itself to the links of hope, it graduates upwards until it ends in heaven!

CHAPTER IX.

BAGNERES DE BIGORRE, CONTINUED—MONSIEUR ARISTIPPE—OTHELLO TRAVESTIED—DUCIS' DESDEMONA—MOONLIGHT—CASTEL MOULET—SILENCE AND SOUNDS—LE BOIS DE MADAME DE GRAMMONT—COURT SHADOWS AND FEODAL ONES—VALLEY OF SCRISSE AND ITS CABINS—THE VALLEY OF TREBONS AND ITS MOUNTAINS—EFFECTS NATURAL AND CONTRADICTORY—A PAUSE—NATIONAL DISHES AND DRESSES—LES CABANES D'ORDENSEDE—THE COWSLIP OF ST. MARIE.

"C'EST étonnant! Monsieur n'a jamais entendu parler de Monsieur Aristippe?" exclaimed the directress of the theatre when E—— stopped at her bureau yesterday. And so she sat about enlightening his ignorance on the subject of this illustrious personage, the sublime pupil of the great Talma, who being on his travels, and finding himself, as an English housemaid would say, *promiscuously* * at Bagnères, had yielded to the

* I have frequently remarked, that amongst the uneducated classes in England, the word *promiscuous* is often used for casual. "I met him promiscuously in Oxford-



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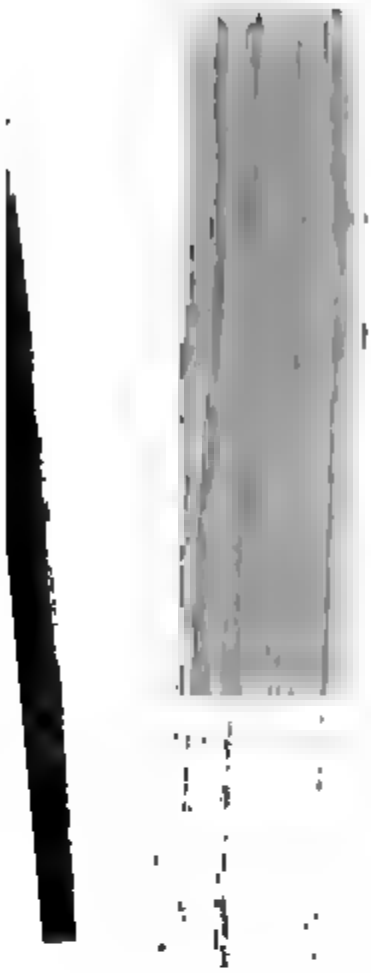
right to be difficult. The gentle Desdemona accompanied her lord, and thus saved him the trouble of sending for her "to the sagittary;" and while he bellowed out his defence,—assaulting rather than conciliating the reverend signors, stood beside him in a scanty petticoat of scarlet, stretched almost to splitting over her Brobdignagian person.

Illustrious Aristippe! if you have failed to move the critics of Bagnères, it was not from want of due exertion; your declamation was in the very first style of the *Conservatoire*, mouthed to rule,—"all sound and fury signifying nothing." But the eye was large and white, and the visage calf like; altogether recalling the image of a certain gooseberry, which (as *Galignani's Messenger* recently informed us,) gardeners distinguish by the name of 'the roaring lion.' Perhaps it may have merely been a political allusion, and that there may be no such gooseberry, though the aforesaid *Messenger* spoke of one in a garden near Chelsea; but if such a thing does exist, Aristippe, in eye a gooseberry and in voice a roaring lion, must be its very type.

But peace be with him! he chose a blanket for his murdering robe: Macbeth prefers a flow-



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tic light, and spiritualizing their solid forms into shadows. The sun opens its broad eye and searches into every recess of nature, drawing out all things, whether mean or beautiful, from their hiding-place; but the uninquisitive moon developes only the grand and graceful outline, and throws her softening veil over the frequent ruggedness of the details. A cottage, poor perhaps and naked by daylight, seems, when it is closed and still with the moonbeams lying on it, like something holy, within whose sacred precincts the blest are sleeping; a mountain, which in the glare of noon may wear a hard and ungracious aspect, like a pavilion suspended from the heavens. The moonlit mountain presents an image of strength in repose that soothes the mind; we forget its customary sternness in the silver dreams that bear us upwards to the beneficial source of light and beauty.

The mind too has, like nature, its sunlights and moonlights. I believe the delight with which we look upon a scene that affects the imagination may, in a great measure, be ascribed to a certain vagueness, an undefined sensation of pleasure, enjoyed without being analyzed, which fills up every chink of the mind. A kind of mental atmosphere is

formed by its influence, in which the past, the present, the future are blended together in tender and harmonious fusion. We float along with the clouds, we look over the mountains, we run its course with the river, or follow the flow of valley. The imagination can, like Ariel, "tread the ooze of the salt deep," or mingle with the stars of the firmament. The colouring of the mountain brings back a recollection; the perfume of a flower awakens a thought; every cloud has a vision in it; every wave seems a messenger to the fancy; the mind settles no where, but floats like a bird who, wrapped in the sense of present enjoyment, poises its wings, and leaves its destiny to the air that sustains it. These are its moonlight moments, and while their influence endures, our thoughts are seldom closely concentrated; when the strong sun returns, the mind becomes less idealized, fancy shifts into certainty, and the vague dreaminess is supplanted by more palpable and harsher forms.

How I wished for a clever Dutch pencil this morning, to hit off a group of cows that had ensconced themselves amidst a cluster of rocks which form the highest point of the Castel Moulet. There they stood; one in an attitude of meditation

broken up by curiosity; another looking sideways and sleepily through a gap; a third, full front, head and horns only visible, in an attitude of sturdy defiance; while one, poised goat-fashion on the point of a peak, with the sky behind it and looking twice its natural size, hung forward with a sort of suspended air, like the bull in the zodiac.

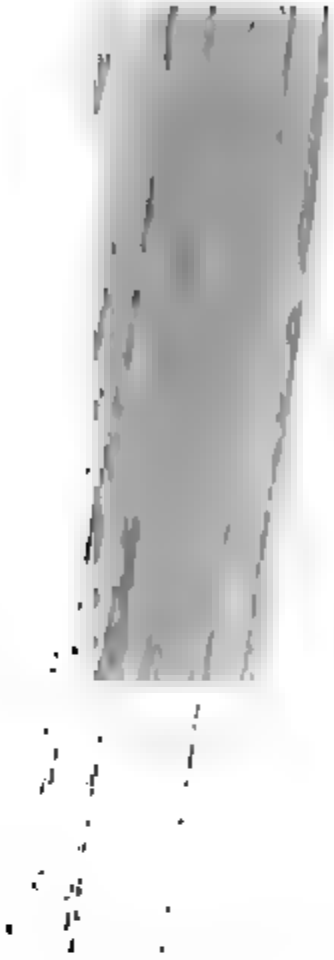
There are charming things visible from Castel Moulet, and valleys to get at it without hut, or field, or tree, or other stream than the thread of water which at this dry season glistens through the narrow bottom like the track of the gossamer, but interesting from their graceful lines, the dark and tufted verdure which covers their sweeping sides and their poetic loneliness; of more power over the imagination than the autumnal bustle of those teeming glens that hang out pictures of social life and full-fed comfort. To-day there was not a bee abroad: even the small sharp file of the grasshopper was silent,—silent as nature "before the winds were made." There is something inexpressibly touching in this perfect stillness; nothing that gabbles in the sunshine has such sweet and thoughtful talk in it, nothing that carols in the air so full a flow of harmony.

All on a sudden, it was broken by the sound of a rustic pipe stealing up from the thickets below. I did not see the player, but the tone, whether breathed by faun or shepherd, was sweet and sleepy: it had the drowsy stillness of a summer noon in it. Descending from Castel Moulet by another path, we found ourselves again in a solitary valley just as the lengthened shadows fell on the hollows of the mountains: the sky was splendid, the hill-tops flooded with golden light, yet there was a solemnity in the silence; the shut-in quiet, the unbreathing atmosphere that subdued its radiance,—even nature seemed to pause and meditate.

A beautiful hill slides in obliquely, closing up the chain of wild valleys, and seeming to form a link between them and the world. Velvet lawns of the true meadow green are dotted over with cottages, each enclosed within its bower of foliage, and sheltered by a spreading wood which our guide called 'le bois de Madame de Grammont.'

The Grammonts are bound up with the history of the Pyrenees; their root-tree is in Navarre, and in the not unfrequent periods of internal contention, their name was often a war-cry, their banner a rallying point. Yet the sound seemed unsuit-

able to the scene; it was like the rustle of a birth-night train, and one almost expected to see a spread petticoat of white damask gliding through the branches; one delicate hand (made more delicate by the falling ruffle) hanging carelessly over the easy swell of the well-managed hoop, the other intercepting the sun by the green-and-gold intervention of a fan of peacock's feathers. A charming vision for the bowers of Chantilly, or the royal alleys of Fontainbleau; but too musked and ambered for the nature-made Pyrenees, where the shade of a gentle chatelaine may sometimes, perhaps, hawk in the grey day-break, before the warm sun has exhaled herself, her greyhound, and her falcon into vapour; or the phantom of a veiled Countess of Bigorre bewail her lord's cruelty through the barred windows of her prison-tower; but as for Grammonts—the feodal are fused into the courtly; and who could now repeat, even to himself, the mere name of Madame de Grammont, or Mademoiselle de Grammont, or the Count de Grammont, without finding his imagination overwhelmed by the splendour, grace, beauty, gallantry, high-breeding, and cool valour of Louis the Fourteenth's court. 'Le bois de Madame de



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others, full of delic
carriage-road throug
hurt the picture a litt
The cottages of Sc
wood, sometimes plan
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the cabins that make one think of the sweet homely curds and-cream ballads of our old English song-writers, who beyond all others knew how to give the charm of simple life—its rustic pleasantness and gentle joy—to their pictures, without making them insipid ones. But what writers they were,—those hearty lovers of country pastimes and concerns! even he

> - - - "who rode sublime
> Upon the seraph wing of ecstasy,"

descended to the natural earth, and subduing his glorious imaginings to the humbler level of rural life, talked lovingly of mowers and milkmaids; and after having painted paradise, and unveiled the pomp of heaven, sang to us in sweet rhymes sown with daisies, and all fragrant with the odour of the hawthorn-flower. Pitied some infant heads and some old ones, that passed us bending under a weight of logs, enough to tire a stout donkey. But the wood costs nothing except the trouble of carrying it, which softens matters prodigiously.

"Si j'avais les moyens," as the French say, I should like to do justice to the scenery round Bagnères de Bigorre, whose soft and placid aspect is far from announcing the world of romance and

loveliness enclosed within its near mountains, and of which many—even of those who have remained long in its neighbourhood, are not aware. How often have people said to me, "O, as to Bagnères, it is not worth looking at; it is only a town like a hundred other little towns,—quite an every-day thing?"

"And the country about it?"

"Very agreeable, but nothing more."

And yet it would be difficult to find—difficult almost to fancy, scenes of prouder beauty or more engaging sweetness, than those which bury themselves between its hills, or charm the eye from their airy summits.

The valley of Trébons (or Oussouet,) has however (I believe) some celebrity as a pic-nic station: I think we have heard so, though it looks as if its solitude had never been profaned by vulgar revelry. I shall say nothing of the lonesome ways by which we passed to get at it, or of the deep glades with a bright light at their windowed end, letting in the distance like a warm cloud; or of the narrow glens with the dark stream rolling through them, like the scenes of Highland story; or yet of the slate-quarries with their deserted look-

ing sheds, of which a solitary child seemed to be sole guardian. As we approached she glided out from one of them, and sitting down on the fern, imbedded herself in it so completely that nothing but her face was visible, and that was half covered with long straight hair; so that one might have fancied her a cast-away mermaid, deposited like an oyster-shell on the top of a mountain by some forgotten deluge. But she was only a poor lonely thing, who had been left to take charge of the hut in the desert, and who had crept out to listen to perhaps the first human sounds which had come that way since the beginning of her solitary stewardship.

From these silent scenes we descended amidst mountains, whose broad green sides were sprinkled over, like the valley of Scrisse, with cheerful cabins encaged in trees, upon the amphitheatre that forms the head of the valley, and of which Mont Aigu is the outward rampart; and there we found a spot of sylvan sweetness shut out from the world, and within its hollow other mountains and other rocks, magically put together. One, detached from the rest, looked like the tomb of the patriarchs,—the tomb of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, in the field of Machphelah, " which is before

Mamré;" and while I gazed on it, the mourning of the thrashing-floor of Atad, the Abelmizraim, was before me; I saw it with the eyes of my heart. Two who were with us had visited this spot before, and having looked on it, lighted up by a bright sun, which in the close mountain depths is never a glaring one, thought it cold by comparison; but I missed nothing. There was a ray resting obliquely on the tomb of the shepherd kings,—a gleam of silvery light, and shadows that came and went: my eyes filled with tears as I looked at them.

When I feel the effects which such scenes, such lights,—such moments,—snatched from the world, produce upon my mind, I often wonder that those who are habitually under their influence, are not habitually virtuous. Necessity, temptation, and facility,—the triple Hecate of sin, would (one should suppose) be far less urgent, less seductive, in the country where wants are proportionably few, and excitements still fewer, than in a mighty capital. Yet we have it from unquestionable authority,—I do not quote the name, but the fact is well known,—that however great crimes may be the growth of the capital and the consequence of its disorders, yet the willing

instruments of their commission are most readily found in the country. Paris, that teeming capital, projects, but cannot always find hands to execute, and is compelled to seek for them in the distant provinces when any thing especially dreadful is to be done.

Why should this be? The inquiry might be curious and interesting to one skilled in moral metaphysics, and accustomed to trace back effects to causes; but to one who, like myself, sees in the works of nature the symbol of divine bounty, who feels deeply the moral and religious influence exercised over the mind by their familiar, their heart-bettering presence, it is the riddle of the Sphinx.

Hard labour in a field surrounded by natural and cheerful images, and hard labour in a noxious alley amidst sounds and sights of wretchedness, ought, one should think, to affect the mind very differently. It may be, that in great towns the bad grow effeminate, and that while the propensity to crime and cruelty is sharpened by excitement, the spirit of wicked daring becomes enfeebled by vicious indulgence. But why it should ripen into the readiness of action in the occupied (I do not say the idle) quiet of the country, remains a problem.

We returned through the valley of Trébons, going downwards from its head for about two leagues, (I think our men said,) until we came to the village of the same name on the road from Bagnères to Tarbes. But long before we reached it, the scene had changed; and the high realities and romantic illusions of the mountain regions, faded gradually, through continuous degrees of sweetness, into plain cabbage-garden prose. On our way we stopped at a Métairie, in the heart of some very fresh meadows, where we borrowed a table and set out our stores under the shade of some pleasant trees; the people of the farm furnished us with milk and butter, an omlette au lard, and a paste of maize, neatly served in small bowls, but not so good, we thought, as it looked.

The flour of maize, or of the blé sarrasin, (buck wheat,) constitutes (with the exception of the garbure already mentioned)* the chief food of the peasant throughout the Pyrenees. Sometimes a soup is made of it, mixed with coarse bread; at others, it is boiled to the consistency of paste, and seasoned with milk, a little butter, or merely salt: when fried it becomes a luxury, and *gourmets*

* Vide vol. i., p. 218.

have been known to sanction its pretensions. My chairmen of Gavarnie, I remember, discussed the claims of their country dishes very amusingly; the pâte of maize was excellent with milk, they said, better much than the pâte de sarrasin; but the last, with butter, was a royal feast!

"Viva il maccaroni!" exclaims the brawny fisherman of Naples, as he hoists two or three yards of that staff of life into the air, and lets it drop between his capacious jaws, unseasoned by any thing but the water it was boiled in; the Highland shepherd lauds his oatmeal cake, and smoking porridge; the English cotter, his beans and bacon; the Irish kern, his potatoe and spalspeen.* Be it maccaroni or maize, thin soup or solid pudding, the national dish is always the favourite one with the people, and sometimes continues so after circumstances have increased the means of indulgence. Rousseau had seldom any appetite at the luxurious table of the Maréchal de Luxembourg; but if, in passing through a hamlet, the odour of some savoury mess chanced to salute his nostrils, he instantly found one.

All which goes to prove that Nature is a hardy nurse, and would (if Circumstance, whom we often

* Salt herring.

take for her, did not step in and whip away h
bantlings,) make the commerce of the East, a
the commerce of the West, of small consequen
Which (to show that all is rightly arrange
would be an incommensurable loss to purses and p
lates; worse than a hurricane to the Spice Island
and a death-blow to the turtle and the tea trade.

But however light the diet of the people be
may be, they thrive most admirably upon it.
would be difficult to see a finer peasantry than w
have every day before us. The children are ha
and blooming, often handsome. A little gi
brought me just now a nosegay, a faint one, bu
classical; pale violets, anemonies, the fragra
fennel, and the blue flower of the rosemary. Vi
gil might have put it together, but the child he
self was the real flower; not a beauty, but with
soft transparency of colouring, a rich yet pur
bloom, that might have well become the freshe
rose or most delicate peach blossom. The wome
in the environs of Bagnères are tall, well made
and in general handsome; we seldom return fro
our country excursions without seeing a face wort
looking at,—some peasant girl walking slowl
along the road, with her distaff stuck in her side
drawing out her thread with a graceful play of th

arm, and concealing more beauty under the shade of her scarlet capulet than is usually found enclosed within the modish curve of a fashionable bonnet. The capulet, folded and laid flat upon the head, so as to advance from the face in the Italian way, and throw a shade upon the upper part of it, is extremely pretty and becoming; it is the general head-dress of the country girls about Bagnères, when the sun is hot enough to be annoying. Elderly persons are fond of the long white capuchons, which they wrap about them as the Arab of the desert does his blanket, and when tanned and savage, as often happens, are perfect Bedouins; quite fit to sit, with their legs under them, on the same bench with the prince bishop, (as the showman called him,) who with his two friends, also children of the wilderness, were exhibited at the last fair of St. Cloud. I shall never forget how they twinkled their animal eyes, looking all the time as if they would have mightily liked to have dined upon the curious, who were popping into their tents to see how the wild horsemen looked,—the Malek Adels of the desert; those incarnations of love and heroism, whom we have so long admired in romance.

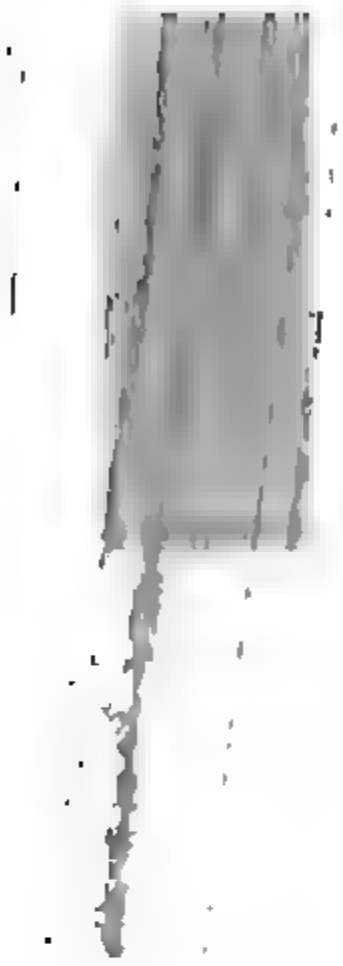
I have talked so much of other people's dinners, that I have forgotten our own—our dinner on the grass, and our country appetites.* I looked into the cottage to see how the people lived, of whose abundance we had partaken. Nothing could be more comfortless; the clay floors damp and in holes, the light excluded; no attempt at order or cleanliness, though space enough for both. In better dwellings, in spacious farm-houses, I have sometimes remarked the same advantages of light and room rendered useless by the same inattention to comfort and appropriation; but the beds are in general good, and the provision of linen often abundant.

What with stopping to dine and loitering to admire, we delayed so long that it was dark before we arrived at Bagnères which we had quitted at nine o'clock. A long day for the chairmen; but they made nothing of it, and trotted home as briskly as they had trotted out. These chairmen are inconceivable people, always fleet, steady, and, if

* A distinguished critic and most delightful writer, whose words are born of thought and clothed in beauty, accused me once of a silver-fork tendency. I wish he could have seen how we pewtered it; it would have done his heart good.

civilly treated, good-humoured; there is no precipitous path, no goats' track, where they will not take you; over the Tourmalet to Barèges, by the mountains to Bagnères de Luchon, into Arragon, Catalonia,—where you will. My habitual porters want to carry me to Toulouse, and would, I have no doubt, go on with me to Nice, if I wished it.

Yesterday we mounted up to the cabins of Ordensède, a serious tug, with a very repaying moment at the end of it. The shepherds' huts, from which the spot is named, are now deserted; but from the heights above them, the whole valley of Campan unfolds itself like a map beneath the feet, developing its Arcadian character, its lateral valleys darkened by wood or lighted by sunbeams, which form the vestibules of the high mountains, and terminate in their deep recesses; the perfection of form that distinguishes its waving hills, the velvet covering drawn by a hand more delicate than that of art, over their rounded sides (never were there such hill-sides), and its extraordinary population. I had been accustomed to consider this valley as a popular superstition of the Pyrenees, believed in without inquiry; but I had only seen the straight road that runs through the



beyond it, into the
of the Tournalet.
too thickly peoplec
scene; the cabins
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within its bower, giv
like look, which str
altogether it is (as se
beautiful, and, in a sc
original as lovely.

A steep road from t
loose stones and crum
full of sharp corners, t
something very like a p
positive pastime to desc

in the talking-line says; and then those who find it rolled out and softened, will of course praise it accordingly.

Had a meal of bread and most delicious milk served to us by the antique cowslip of a farm-house in the village of Sainte Marie; a good-humoured woman, who chucked me under the chin as if I was her gossip. Admired the neatness of the house, which might be cited as an example of that kind of comfort in which the rustic dwellings of the Pyrenees are often deficient; admired, too, the pleasant look round from the garden, and the wooded opening of a wild valley, of which the evening sun was making something marvellously sweet. The woman echoed our praises loudly,—"Monsieur le sous préfet et ces dames," had been the week before to see it;—could its beauty be doubted? Not, certainly, by our cowslip; who, though somewhat tea-coloured, deserved for her hearty good-humour and country courtesy to die, like Sir Thomas Overbury's milkmaid, in spring, "and have good store of flowers stuck round her winding-sheet."

It is not a
country of
melancholy,
Novelty may
ence call them
brought sudde
some legend o
real sorrow, so
dead one. For
frail, are there
which torrents,
the lake navigated
it; we stand

A mournful story has just reached us,—a melancholy comment on this page of danger. Two young persons,* strangers from England and only married a month, set out from Cauteretz to pass a lonely, pleasant day amidst the mountains. Arrived at the Lac de Gaube, the gentleman expressed a wish to row a little on it; but the old fisherman, who had piloted the boat for more than forty years, had died a day or two before, and there was no one to supply his place. It is said that the lady feared to venture out in so frail a skiff, unless accompanied by some one accustomed to the lake, and tried to dissuade her husband from going; but not being able to prevail, went with him. Soon after, screams were heard, and those on shore saw her standing up alone in the boat, the image of despair; a moment after there was a plash,—and the next she was seen floating! For a little while her clothes sustained her, but the chairmen, who had brought her over the mountains and were the sole witnesses of this appalling scene, did not know how to swim, and there was no attempt made to save her life.

It appears, that this horrible catastrophe could

* Mr. and Mrs. Patteson.

not have been seen distinctly from the shore, for no one can tell exactly how it happened. As the boat was not overset, it is imagined that the ill-fated husband may have dropped his oar into the water, and stooping to recover it, have overreached himself, or been thrown out by its sudden inclination to one side; and that his wretched wife, finding that her cries brought no assistance, had plunged in after him in an agony of despair. Poor devoted creature! hers was doubtless a gay heart, —perhaps a timid one; but woman's love is the heroism of passion. She, weak trembling being, frightened at a scratch, startled by the sighing of the wind, is the true soldier of the forlorn hope,—bound even to death.

I have seldom heard a sadder tale of love blighted in its blowing; of hearts, but a moment before so full of present and projected happiness, so quickly and frightfully stilled. There was no billowy swell, such as sometimes ruffles the face of the deep lake, not a breath of wind, not a cloud across the sun; calmness was in the heavens and on the earth. Two embarked gaily; two were together; and then there was only one,—and she with death in her cry, and none to save her!

But O the bright and beautiful ray of love that gilds this dismal story! the true heart, the brave and tender one,—that, failing to save, would follow the husband of its love!

Death his pall drew over her,
Flow'rs were none to cover her;
Never sorrow, never tear,
Did embalm her hasty bier.
Twice baptised was the bride;
Married twice,—twice side by side,
At the altar, 'neath the wave,
Bound by vow, and bound by grave.
Nothing shall dissever them,
Nothing rive their double stem.
They are linked for aye together
In the everlasting tether.
Holy bride,—devoted one,
Well thy double crown was won!
Crown of martyr, crown of love,
Death below, and joy above!

It is now five days since this sad event took place, and only one of the bodies has been found—that of the poor lady. It was recovered a short time after the extinction of life, and borne back to Cauteretz over the same mountain-path which she had traversed but a few hours before, in that affluence of hope whose future has no limit.*

* A monumental stone has since been erected to the memory of this ill-fated pair, on the border of the lake.

CHAPTER XI.

DEPARTURE FROM BAGNERES DE BIGORRE—MY ALPUXARAS — CONVENT OF ESCALADIEU — MAUVOISE — MOONLIGHT WATCHING—A STORM—THE BEAUTY OF BETRIN—A VILLAGE INN—BERGHEM SCENERY—BAGNERES DE LUCHON—VALLEY DE LYS—ITS BOAZ AND ITS RUTH—FLOWERS—SHEEP AND GOATS—A MOUNTAIN TOWN—THE MOTHER'S SMILE—UNEDUCATED CRITICISM.

OCTOBER 2nd. I think I should have been sorry to have quitted Bagnères, whose sweet accessible country has greatly delighted me,—sorry, I mean, on its own account,—had not a nearer concern, a more home regret, effaced the weaker feeling. Perhaps we should be too happy, if we were always surrounded by those we love. If there was no chasm through which regret could enter,—no separation, no absence,—how should we resign ourselves to die!

After having clambered up all the accredited heights in the neighbourhood of Bagnères, the Pic

du Midi excepted, which though not, I believe, of very difficult access, is still beyond the reach of my puny capabilities, we have bid it adieu. In the morning the sun shone out fitfully, but the distant clouds were heavy; so was my heart, and I almost thanked that bright sun when it hid its glory: it seemed then as if the aspect of nature shaped itself to my feelings, soothing them with mute, but most expressive sympathy.

But the sky brightened as we advanced, and our farewell-look back at Bagnères and its surroundings from the ascent of the Toulouse road, left a beautiful impression on my mind, and yet a sad one. I thought of that point of the Alpuxxaras from which Boabdil looked his last on Granada; that point which the Spaniards call "el ultimo suspiro del Moro;" and gave a sigh too, and a very deep one, though not for

"Thrones, dominations, princedoms, powers,"

but for something dearer to me than all put together. O, the leaving behind is a sad thing! and the being left behind is, they say, still sadder. I, too, used to think so, but this morning it seemed to me otherwise.

Still the sun grew brighter; and while the Pic

du Midi, and all the higher summits were tipped with snow, the green mountains of the second tier warmed themselves in its beams. Scarcely a yellow leaf to be seen: if it were not for the maize, which is fast approaching the spoonbill state, and hangs out the colours of autumn in its ragged streamers, one might fancy it July. I could not look at the Pic du Midi without something like regret at not having mounted up to it. Those who have achieved the Maladetta, or the Mont Perdu,—so long the north-west passage of the Pyrenees, but at length conquered,—treat the Pic du Midi as a garden walk, or at least a lady's mountain; but admit the views which it commands to be among the very finest.

From Bagnères to the old monastery of Escaladieu, (now *campagne* and post-house,) we had soft vales and woody screens drawn out behind each other, and bushy hollows with a fine wave-like border of mountains. Escaladieu has lost its monastic character, at least exteriorly, but the oak-forest in which it seems buried, is good; and so is the castle of Mauvoizé, (or Mauvezin,) cresting a detached hill and looking upon it proudly. The convent has had its

miracles, and the castle its siege. When the Duc d'Anjou, more fortunate than he was afterwards at Lourdes, attacked and became master of it in 1347, the governor, Raymonet de L'Epée (who held it in trust for the English) did his duty bravely; yielding at last, not to the arms of the enemy, but to the want of water. Hunger and thirst are worse adversaries than cannon balls: "A cup of water, and I will fight the day down."

The old connexion between the convent and the castle has now no general existence, except in ruins; but whenever I see its traces, I find a meaning in them that sets one thinking of the moody stories of old long ago; and if I was not afraid of encountering something more material than the spirits of the desert, I should have no objection to "outwatch the Bear," from cloister or from tower, on some fair still night when the stars were out, provided that I could put my head through hole or casement, and have the air, and the sky, and the passing clouds for company. I do not love charnel-house gloom, nor the shut-up and remote gallery of an untenanted and lonely house at midnight; nor am I sure of the effect which (though not naturally fearful) such things might have

upon my imagination. But leaning from my casement, above the dangers of earth, and with the pale moon and watching stars over my head, I think I should feel as if angels were about me, and listen to the low chaunt or swelling chorus of the dead and buried monks, as to something too high and holy to inspire the earthly feeling of superstitious dread.

As we journeyed on, leaving Escaladieu behind us, we were struck by a prodigious effect of light, or rather darkness; the vast hollow that lay beneath us at one side, was entirely overhung and encircled by a sable curtain of thick clouds, that left only a narrow selvage of light visible beneath its heavy rim. The woods within the circle seemed to blacken under the eye; while, standing out from their gloomy and portentous back-ground, was the tower of Mauvoizé, with a wild bright gleam on it that rayed out from under the heavy curtain. At a distance, a field strewed thickly over with layers of dry fern, had been set on fire, and blazed like a volcano in full activity, crackling, throwing up volumes of smoke, and darkening the sky luridly.

At length the storm burst, and down came a

deluge, blotting out every thing. No silver selvage or rayed light, nothing but huge spongy clouds that seemed to rain mud; then, as these dirty wool packs cleared off, a gipsy country showed itself; rough dingles, heathy commons, and oak woods. Two women, riding against the rain, both astride on one horse and enveloped from head to foot in their long capuchons, would have startled the illustrious Husseim* himself. Another, similarly hooded, but the mantle black and drawn across the face, so as just to leave the eyes visible, strode beside them: all admirable desert furniture. Rain at Montrejau, and the first for six months; so the good folks were blessing the clouds, and standing about their doors as if it were a luxury to be soaked through. After Montrejau, some pleasant cottages, with chestnut groves, fig trees, and vines hanging their convolved garlands from branch to branch. Herds of swine roaming about the woods, and wallowing in the acorns: swine are a favourite stock in the Pyrenees, and not only in the woods, but in the towns too, where they sometimes run about the streets as dogs do at Constantinople.

Rain, hills, and post-boys so delayed us, that

* The Dey of Algiers.

we were obliged to sleep at Betrin, a hamlet with a farm-house inn of rather an untempting exterior. The daughter of the house is a beauty of high repute; to me she appeared rather a sooty and very slatternly concern, but with a Greek style of head that might become the two long tresses, or small embroidered fési cap; a strait outline, large black eyes, languid but not languishing,—dull perhaps is the better word; inky lashes and hair, but an unfurnished countenance—a blank and hollow one, without mind, grace, freshness, or, that I could see, teeth. Few stop here that can help it, and yet there are worse places. A village inn is always, to my fancy, preferable to a town one, unless it be very bad indeed; many would call this so, but for myself I like to hear the cocks crow, and to see the pigeons flying about from roof to window, and the oxen unyoking, and the grave duck waddling at the head of her progeny into the puddle; and greatly prefer the blacksmith's shed with an old tree against it, or the scattered timber and country air of a wheelwright's yard, hedged round with hawthorn, a large elder bush in one corner and a weigh-beam with an idle urchin at each end of it in another, to the close street and

the opposite neighbour. Here our opposite neighbour is a wooded hill, on which the rain (now over) has left an iris, that spans the dewy boughs with as bright an arch as if it had been flung over the spray of a cataract.

Wednesday. A beautiful sparkling day after a wet night, but hot; and the moisture exhaled by the sun, rolling off from the flanks of the mountains like smoke from the pores of a volcano. Valleys ground in somewhat raggedly, but with fine bits, and an amazing colouring in the near mountains,—a rich priming of moss and heath, all velvet browns or soft purple, and the golden glow of the fern, now a deep orange, brightening over it; while the lingering verdure of the oak still gives a summer air to the sheltered hollows. But generally speaking, the leaves are at least a fortnight more autumnal here than at Bagnères de Bigorre.

Some soft changes of scenery, though a little spoiled by the barbarous peeling of the trees. The lovers of Berghem, and other painters of the same school, may often meet his scenes in the Pyrenees. A plain enclosed by mountains, and traversed by a river; a flock of sheep, a herd of cattle,—the shepherd balanced on his sauntering mule, the woman

sideways on her sleepy horse; barking dogs or watchful ones, a fine tree or a lopped one, and a painter's atmosphere. As we approach Bagnères de Luchon, the sky thickens,—dirty-water clouds, sulky, not grand; the wooded mountains fine, and the tinting magnificent. But the landscape wants lighting up, and while it begs with a damp wintry face for a ray or two, the ill-humoured sun hides himself from us; and after all the bright morning promises, draws the curtain of his tent, and plays the invisible just as we want his good offices.

Thursday—Bagnères de Luchon. A brilliant morning has put us all in good humour, and we discover that the avenue of lime trees, (Versailles has nothing more royal,) which separates the town from the baths, must in summer be not only a beautiful thing to look upon, but also a most luxurious shelter from the fervours of the *canicule*, compared with which our dog-star may be allowed to call itself by the moist name of dew-lap. At each side of this avenue are detached houses, some large and good looking, which are usually inhabited during the season by summer visitors. It is the fashionable promenade; but equipages, cavaliers, and ladies, have returned to gladden the provincial

capitals; and the gay mall is changed to a winter walk, with bare trees and an undulating carpet of yellow leaves.

However, we found green ones again in the valley de Lys. In getting to it, we passed the ruins of Castel Vieilh, cresting the summit of an isolated rock at the opening of the gorge that leads to the Spanish valley of Aran. Similar towers are frequent in the Pyrenees, and many are believed (perhaps ascertained) to be of English origin, and to date from the time when the chances of war, or alliance, gave the English a temporary possession in this country.

Nothing can be more lovely than the beech woods at this moment: such a fusion of tints, the bright green leaf arriving at the red one through so many intermediate hues, almost like the blending colours of the rainbow. We turned to the right from the valley de Luchon, and passed through a wooded defile, half in shade and half in splendour, with a clear rough stream brawling through it; over which some old trees extended their knotted arms, forming a bower above the water, through which the eye scarcely penetrated. To this wild glen the valley de Lys links itself

up and was off,
grange at a little
a bowl of deliciou
first strawberries.
it, we inquired wh
sieur," replied our
Boaz of the daisies,
bowl between his fi
both kine and land.
Pyrenees all are l
garden or a field; a
fruit of his own vin
of his own cistern," i
springs did not ren
which image so stru

more copious and sparkling, gleaming through the dark trees like a shooting star; and some clustering peaks peering over the deep area, with a little snow and a flood of sunshine on them. Large pastures covered with herds feeding peacefully or ruminating in the clear stream, form the carpet of the valley, and numerous granges are scattered over its gentle swells. As we passed the door of one, a very handsome girl opened it, and looked out: the Ruth certainly eclipsed the Boaz.

In these intermediate valleys, that lie between the high pastures and the warmer regions of the lower lands, is the summer dwelling of the farmer. Here he lives with his family, sowing and reaping, irrigating his meadows, cutting his grass, and housing his winter store of food and forage, until the increasing severity of the weather sends him down to his village shelter, his winter gossip and warm corner; when he leaves his grange to be occupied by his shepherd, who, descending from the solitude of the mountains to the still deeper solitude of the valley, exchanges the summer sun and the blue sky for the overwhelming snow and the long and lonely nights of the dark season. And stabling

himself and his flocks under the same roof, waits with a patient and edifying endurance of the season's vigour, of utter loneliness and extreme privation, until the sun comes again in its beauty and calls him up to the thymy pastures, where he once more enjoys the sober liberty of the broad heath, and the sweet neighbourhood of the summer sky.

The turf in this sequestered valley is no longer enamelled with the flower from which it derives its balmy name. But in summer, if report be true, that bank of "ox-lip and the nodding violet," which it is incense to think of, was not more thickly set with sweets, more lavishly embroidered, than are these dappled fields, that wear their scented garniture—one cannot say, as of some others, only for the stars and the shepherds, but for *le ravissant pique-nique*, with its delightful opportunities and happy chances; when a gay party trot down the anemonies, make amends for a hot ride by a cold dinner, and flirt their way back again by moon-light, or star-light, or no light, if the skies should be mystical.

Sheep are a charming stock for lawns, and a convenient one for young beginners in the land-

scape line, who dot them off at a touch, and scatter them about like caraway-comfits; but for mountain scenery, there is nothing like the goat. How those horned philosophers become all wild and solitary places! There is a flock at this moment hanging almost in the air just over our heads, and looking as if their light weight would bring down the nicely poised masses of granite on which they seem suspended,—masses detached in gone-by time from the mountain to whose sides they still cling, sustained by the branching arms of the beech trees, which have grown up under them. A shaggy-bearded Tityrus leads the van; his aged eyes look down upon us with an expression of dulled displeasure; he even makes a slight movement with his horns, but habitual laziness gets the better of his wrath, and, after an instant of excitement, he returns to his habitual air of watchful gravity.

As we return homewards through the close valleys, the shadows of evening fall in broad sheets upon the wooded mountains,—wooded from the summit to the base. The effect of this dark sweep of foliage, is fine and powerful; coming darkness is always powerful, the mind builds for

it a tabernacle, where thought and fancy worship; there is a spirit of melancholy in it that stirs the soul, a sweet contagion that spreads itself silently like the night clouds, whose quiet progress veils the face of heaven, and while they steal upon it, give to the evening aspect of these wild glens a touching and almost supernatural character.

How such scenes throw back the world—the present world! How they open the sources of thought, and renew that meditative faculty which (strange though it may seem) belongs to the earlier stages of youth, but quits us when reflection becomes calulation, as it so often does in after life!

I speak of meditation awakened by natural objects. When existence is new, it is not ripened thought that reflects, it is not experience that deduces, it is the soul that, with its instinct of beauty freshly awakened, casts itself upon the expanse of life; and having time, space, hope, before it, all ills unknown, all promises untried, pauses on the spot it loves, fondly allying its beauty with the brightly imaged but unknown future, which spreads itself out in the distance.

Leisure, the friend of thought, seems then inexhaustible, and the soul, wrapped in the beautiful tissue of hope, lingers within its folds as if it feared that, in disengaging itself, it should break the threads of so fair a texture; and thus dreams on, till a sudden jerk pushes it into the briery paths of this every-day world.

When, in after years, we look about from the ground to which we then looked forward, we do not meditate,—we scarcely pause. Hopes (I mean earthly ones) have changed into retrospections: they are not extinguished, for we feel them tenderly awakened for our children, and for those who are dear to us, but with the drawback of experience on them. The feelings of a loving heart can never *at any moment* be altogether individual; and as the chances of life grow less, and those cares which we feel for others become closer and more clinging, the actual supplants the ideal; thought no longer creates, it only recalls; and that luxury of meditation, whose very melancholy is full of vague hopes and thronging fancies, in which the *to come* stirs like an unseen spirit of good, gives way to sobered, or more anxious influences.

Yet the aspect of nature never wholly loses its power over minds that have once felt its charm; and there are still moments when, renewing dear acquaintanceship with its once familiar loveliness, we feel its inspirations ruling us again as in the May of life; moments when the love of action, or the habit of it, lapses into the love of musing by which it was originally produced; when thought again becomes poetry, not written in the rays of the morning sun, but traced in the still delicious colours which are left behind at its setting. At evening, and in these deep valleys, the meditative spirit which used to dwell with me in my early youth often visits me again, and we still walk abroad linked hand-in-hand together.

This is a downright mountain town; the news of the morning is, that a bear has been shot a few fields off, while he was supping on Turkish wheat, little thinking of a bullet in the thorax. At every moment the tinkling of bells announces the return of the flocks from the high pastures; a muffled shepherd, a huge dog, a hunter with an izard,

which he has just killed, flung across his shoulders,- or a wood-cutter with his axe and wallet, are the principal figures; to which a file of rough mountain horses laden with wood, or a country cart drawn by oxen, serve as accessories. So far as dress may be taken as a criterion of comfort, the peasants of the valley of Luchon, seem not the most comfortable in the Pyrenees. I do not speak of the inhabitants of the town who fatten on lucky casualties; but of the country people, who are often poorly clad, and in personal negligence somewhat germane to their neighbours the Spaniards, who are perfect incrustations.

I was rather touched this morning by the expression of maternal tenderness with which a poor woman, who rode beside us as we jogged along the valley, gazed at her children and caressed them. One was a baby in arms, the other a little fellow of three years old, who clung to the saddle with surprising tenacity; the mother was a plain woman and slatternly, but I have never seen a sweeter smile than hers, when she held up the little one to be kissed by its brother. Such a fond heartfelt smile! it quite illumined her coarse features, and

made one think how secondary is the beauty of complexion, or even of symmetry, to the charm of expression; that sign of soul, and symbol of all those tender shades of character which are too fine and fugitive for the heavier developement of words.

The subject of beauty, or its elements, puts me in mind of the chambermaid's answer, when I asked her this morning what she thought of the beauty of Betrin: "Trop noire, mais il y a quelque chose de beau ici;" and she passed her hand across the middle of her forehead. I was struck with the delicacy of the criticism from so coarse a critic; but opinions, undirected by the finger-post of authorized rule, have often an instinct of taste, a feeling of what is, or what ought to be, not always within the power of education to confer. I recollect a country gossip, a hawker of cream-cheese, in Ireland, once talking to me of a girl who was her neighbour, and the beauty of the village; and after a long eulogium on her coal-black hair and apple cheek, adding, that she had no knobs on her knuckles.

Another example. I once knew a certain abi-

gail, who could neither read nor write, and never, I believe, was accused of having an idea of her own, or indeed of thoroughly comprehending one when presented to her by another: yet this person, when taken to the gallery of the Louvre, said, "I don't like the pictures of our Saviour: he is only like a good man, but not heavenly; nothing, as it were, of glory."

CHAPTER XII.

OPENING OF AN ATTACK UPON SPAIN—EXCURSION TO THE PORT DE VENASQUE—THE HOSPICE—DESERT SOUNDS—THE ASCENT—FIRST SIGHT OF ARRAGON—DISAPPOINTMENT—A VOW—EFFECTS OF CERTAIN SCENERY ON CERTAIN MINDS—THE BREACH IN THE WALL—THE MALADETTA AND ITS UNICORN—SMUGGLERS—THE COW HORN—A MONTH TOO LATE—AUTUMN IN THE HIGH VALLEYS AND IN THE LOW.

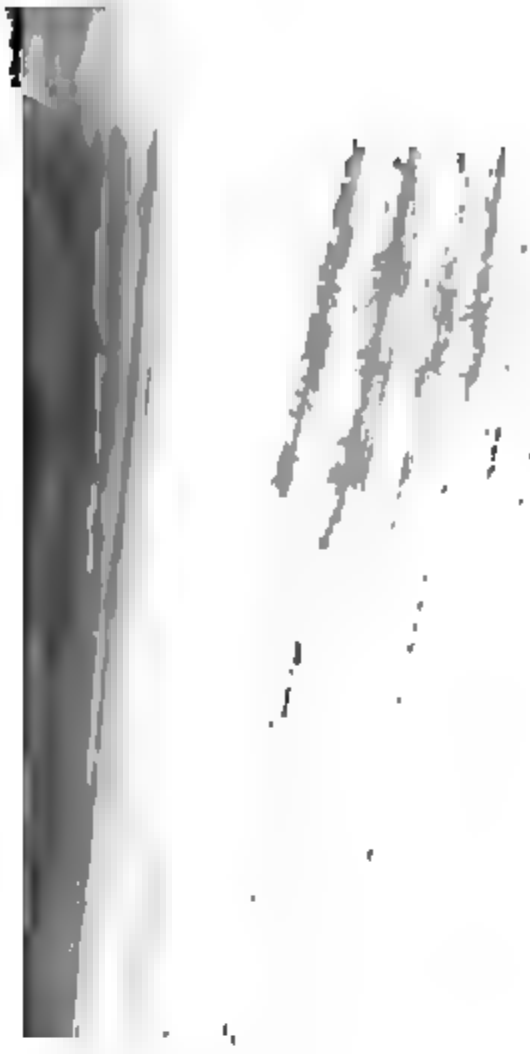
After having talked, wished, hoped, and despaired, we have at length stood upon Spanish ground; not firmly however, for we were merely blown in and blown out again through an aperture in the mountains; and had but just time enough to niche ourselves close to the jut of a rock, and look round hastily. Indeed even this imperfect peep was not achieved without difficulty; and the loss of an hour in the morning, which we could not recover afterwards, half spoiled our excursion.

Instead of quitting Bagnères at six, as we ought to have done, we took the advice of our guide,

and did not set off till after the clock had struck seven. The road passes through the valley of Luchon, leaving Castel Vieilh to the left, and the turn to the valley de Lys to the right; the bristling summits of the Port de Venasque * were full in view, and though we could not see the breach, yet the mountains of clouds which the wind forced through it were most uncomfortably visible.

We ascended through a forest of beech, mixed up with other summer trees, a sprinkling of funereal pines, and a rich thickening of nut and elder, but no sign of habitation save the deserted hut of some charcoal-burners. As we advanced, the wind howled above our heads and made us fear for the success of our little enterprise. However, we jogged on to the Hospice,—a true Swiss house of refuge outwardly, but within, (as those who have seen both say) a legitimate Spanish posada. The ground-floor is divided into three parts, of which the kitchen forms the centre; a capacious chimney and a blazing fire gave it a look of something like comfort, to which it certainly had no other ground of pretension: for though tolerably clean, the walls

* The openings in the mountains (of which there are several) that communicate with Spain, are called Ports.



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strong wind would uncap it, and there was every indication of a storm. As we ascended slowly, a track unfolded itself: I may literally say unfolded, for its short zig-zag often traced a pattern, as precisely designed as the embroidery of a petticoat. Following those repeated doublings, we gained ground on the mountains; sometimes skirting the edge of the precipice, sometimes by ways so steep, that those who were on horseback found themselves obliged to dismount, and leave their steeds to make it out as they could.

But there was no danger in our difficulties, except that which might have arisen from the accident of the wind; nothing sufficiently occupying to make us for a moment insensible to the might and power of the scene around us, or to the solemn and accordant movement of the eagle who wheeled slowly round, sometimes in ample, sometimes in diminished circles, over our heads; at one moment lowering his majestic flight as if welcoming us to his dreary domain, then soaring upwards and resting on the air, sustained and still, like a throned cloud to which fancy had given form. At intervals the sharp and monotonous whistle of the wild birds nestled in the rocks, broke the universal

silence. The melancholy cry of these birds is the true music of the desert; its sound, distinctly heard where no other sound disputes the ear, makes more impression than the noise of trumpets in the thronged street. They who placed the shrine in the wilderness had studied human nature, and well knew how sweet to the heart of man is the pilgrim worship that offers up its incense on the threshold of the heavens. Necessity and convenience draw men together to pray in crowded cities amidst the calling off of other cares; but on the high mountains, in the silent valley, the heart waits not for the stated time, the tolled hour, and lauds without knowing that its praise is prayer.

As we wound upwards, our guide pointed out to us a mountain, from whose surface all trace of vegetation had been effaced by fire. It was quite black in many parts: the shepherds had done it, he said. I asked if from malice or accident: from neither, he replied, " c'étoit par enfantillage." To what cheerless sports are the poor Lysanders of the barrier mountains reduced! Farther on, we passed the lonely grave of four Spaniards, who were surprised here by an avalanche, and perished in the desert; and higher up four melancholy lakes,

deep, and dark, and clear, lay linked together within the hollow of the mountains. The largest was just beneath our feet; a partial air passed over it, curling its surface languidly; the next was motionless,—each had a single rock, small and tomb-like, rising out of its bosom; and on the third lay a pale steel-coloured gleam, that gave a cold metallic cast to its waters. These lakes added a still graver tint to the sombre colouring of the surrounding objects, as still water always does to scenery of a serious character.

We continued for some time to toil our way upwards, struggling against the wind that blew in our teeth, and threatened at every whisk to carry my chair over the edge of the precipice; indeed it was with considerable difficulty that four men, using all their strength, could hold it down. L——, who kept close to me, was seriously alarmed, dreading every moment to see his better half piped into eternity by those chubby, bellows-cheeked, head-and-fin varlets, who kept puffing at us from all points of the compass.

At length we came within sight of "the imminent deadly breach." Here the rocks are nearly vertical, so that, to compass an ascent, the path is made to

turn at every six or eight feet: had it not been for the strong barrier of stones, we should have found it impracticable in the teeth of such a blast. The wind roared through the chasm with a tremendous sound, like the rolling of the six hundred chariots of Pharaoh. My chairmen could hardly make head against it: several times we were driven back; but at length, by a desperate push, they succeeded in forcing their way through the portal, and thus made a forcible entrance into the kingdom of Arragon.

How rejoiced I was to find myself there! and then, after the first glance, how disappointed! yet I scarcely knew what I had expected: perhaps thirty degrees of Reaumur, sunny vales, citron groves, convent spires, towered cities in the distance, and spreading cork trees on the fore-ground. I cannot say, in short, what my visions may have been; but the reality was the austere and mighty Maladetta (worth, some might think, all that my inordinate fancy had put together) with its mantle of snow and its zone of glaciers; its lofty head veiled in clouds, and at its base a valley covered with thin herbage, with other valleys issuing from it; a scattering of dark pines, a limited horizon, and

bleak peaks, white as itself. The other side of the mountains, the Spanish *versant*, had always seemed to me to carry with it a summer sound,—a date-and-fig and lemon odour; but an aspect of nature so unexpected, startled me out of my southern visions.

"That day I *dreamt* no more,"

at least of the red almond, or the green lime, or yet of Dorothea with her pretty feet in the summer stream, or other fine weather fancies with which my head teemed.

But even the bare breath of Spain, icicled as it was, had its influence; and in that moment, —great resolutions being often engendered of casualties,—I made a vow (that is, a sort of a one) which, should I ever be so near to it again, I hope to accomplish. It will not take me to the shrine of St. Jago de Compostela, but to the strong-hold of the Moors,—to the halls and fountains of the Alhambra, whose walls still seem to echo the bold counsels of Ayxa, the heroic mother of the feeble Boabdil, and the soft pleadings of Zorayma his tender wife; or mournfully to answer to the lament of the Moorish governor for the loss of his daughter, Fatima the Moresca. It will take

me too, this vow of mine, to the mountains of Ronda, where (as I once read in a charming little book) "the soldiers of the faith broke the right wing of the Mahometan vulture;" and to Malaga, were it only for the sake of the deep colouring which it receives from the remembrance of that night of woe to the Moors, when their wives and children were driven from the beautiful city of their birth, and sold, like the daughters of Jerusalem, into bondage. What a neighbourhood for thought! what recollections are these of high deeds and heavy sorrows!

But to return to my bit of Arragon. There were pastures, but neither herds nor shepherds; the solitude was profound, the storm loud, the clouds disturbed and moving rapidly; there were broad glares of cold sunshine,—not constant ones, and a look of stillness in the motionless mountains, and in the short unbending pines and close herbage, that contrasted strangely with the noise and hurry in the heavens. There are minds eager of emotion, minds worn out by the constant recurrence of the same impressions, that might find a renewing power in such a scene; but there are others who have also worn out life, or consumed

it in the languor of ennui, who too feel the necessity of strong excitement, but would shrink from seeking it in this stormy solitude. The reveries of Obermann, prolonged through seasons, years, a life, by the murmur of the rolling river, under the broad tree, or beside the warm hearth when the rain beats against the roof or the snow falls, might here darken into the dreamings of despair. Rousseau, whose most profound thoughts were often awakened by the simplest and most common-place images, might have felt the sensibility which a sprig of periwinkle could excite, chilled into despondence, or angered into desperation. While Manfred, in the cold and sterile regions of the Maladetta, in the mystery of its clouds and silence, would have recognised the occult nature, of whose dark secrets his grand and melancholy imaginings had shown him gleams; or Faust the wild world, where the spirits of the cursed hold shrieking revels.

In summer days, when the air is calm, the sky cloudless, and the pastures covered with flocks, this Spanish *versant* of the Pyrenees may wear a gentler and less imposing aspect. The peaks may lose their snow, the vale its silence, and even the

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To get from France into Italy, we may follow the windings of the Mediterranean shore without being apprised, by any sudden change of scenery or colouring, that we have passed from one country to another; or we may enter by a journey over the Alps, which prepares the mind by a gradual change of climate and of vegetation for all that is to follow. But here one runs in and out,—one moment in France, the next in Spain, just as one might through a breach in a garden wall, only the wall here is some feet thicker; and yet the barrier is a magnificent one, and the kingdoms as boldly separated by nature, as fear, prejudice, or policy could desire.

We greatly wished to have returned by the Port de la Picade, and the Catalonian valley of Aran. But the hour which we had lost in the morning was not to be found again; and we were obliged to come out as we had gone in, with only one slight, unsatisfying glance of that which had been so tricked and rainbowed in our fancies. Of the official impediments likely to be thrown in our way, we neither saw nor heard any thing; the door was open and we had only to go in, and might, I dare say, have walked on to Zaragoza,

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Toulouse, which by the road is somewhere about eighty miles distant; but next door—our men said, as the crow flies, which assertion immediately convinced me (though I cannot exactly say how) of their identity. Farther down, a band of Spanish smugglers passed us on their way homewards, with a string of mules purchased in the valley of Arrau, which they projected slipping in duty free. I had always believed that the Spanish mule was the handsomest of the species; but it appears that great numbers are imported annually into Spain from the Pyrenees, and that a considerable traffic is carried on in this particular branch of commerce between the frontier valleys of each country.

As the carabineers have full power to fire at whoever they may catch attempting to pass into Spain at this time of cholera without having first performed quarantine; and as it seemed impossible that six men with thirty mules could hope to glide in on tiptoe, we inquired how these conscientious tradesmen meant to manage matters. Our guide replied, that being smugglers,—he had been one himself, he added proudly,—they were prepared to kill or be killed. The men were cer-

tainly six of the most pacific figures I ever beheld, and, in all likelihood, were prepared with two or three five-franc pieces,—a species of propitiation rarely rejected by the gentlemen who administer justice on the frontiers.

We arrived, chilled with cold, at the Hospice; where, finding snug seats in the chimney, we warmed ourselves thoroughly; and then proceeded to Bagnères. The storm had subsided, and the calm of the forest, the coming twilight, and the still grey sky, were soothing after the bluster of the Venasque; yet there was something almost solemn in the contrast. It was like the quiet evening of a boisterous life; the tumult is over, we enjoy our repose, but we enjoy it pensively; the susceptibility of livelier emotion has passed away with the occasions which called it forth.

As we descended into the valley of Luchon, we heard the swell of the Alp-horn in the meadows; it was a tuneless one, the old Egyptian flute—the cow-horn, but without the holes; pleasant, however, if only for its memory of Switzerland. Our guide (an old man) talked of this horn-blowing as a new accomplishment, and one for which he had no toleration; all the younkers did it, he said

contemptuously. This little burst of spleen was certainly out of season, for as yet the shepherds of the Pyrenees seem content to enjoy their beautiful country without setting their feelings to music, or even vocalizing them; though I have been told of sweet voices going about in bands at the fête of Laruns in the valley of Ossau, and of young vine-dressers in the valley of Pau singing in parts, like German students, as they go along the roads to their morning's work; but generally speaking, the birds are the only minstrels,—at least the only ones who will sing without being asked. The chairmen (like mine of Gavarnie) are sometimes prepared with a few of Despourrin's ballads; but there are mountain melodies—and sweet ones, that are never heard except by those who go in search of them.

Through the whole of this fine valley there is a uniformity of character and colouring, which might become fatiguing on frequent repetition; every winding of the road developes a scene nearly similar to that which precedes it; the woods are still in great beauty, though sometimes, perhaps, over-golden: but yet we are a month too late,—the autumnal chill begins to make itself felt in the mountains; and though at mid-day the air is soft

and the sky sunny—delightfully so, yet the evenings are rather raw and the hill-tops misty, to say nothing of the short days, so inconvenient for long excursions.

It is trying a country by a drum-head court-martial to judge of it from the hasty and imperfect means which a visit at this advanced season affords. But even in this superficial way we have seen enough of Bagnères de Luchon to enter into the character of its beauty, and perhaps with a deeper feeling than its summer loveliness could have inspired. The forests have probably more charm,—certainly a tenderer and more poetic interest; the mind is more intensely touched by the aspect of that beauty which fades while it is gazed upon, than by the brighter loveliness that promises to abide our time and scrutiny. But still many summer features have passed away that have left no substitutes,—the sun-sets, the long shadows, the warm twilight, the song of birds, the enamel of the meadows, and all the fresh and variegated minutiæ of nature, which though we pass on without looking into its details, charms the senses by the general gloss and perfume of its balmy surface. Autumn, in the valleys that repose at the feet of

the great mountains, yet out of the immediate reach of their influence, is but the sweet and gradual decline of summer; we still have the liquid amber and bright red of the softened sun-set,—the tender lights of evening,—the unimaginable lights! The throstle and the blackbird, and all the little peckers in the vineyards and corn-fields, sing late and long; the rooks caw on the wing, and the magpie steals a bit of its dreariness out of the coming winter by its household chatter; the mountain distance seems almost transparent, and the woods retain their variegated foliage, their inimitable tinting, with a sweet egotism that resigns its treasures only to the imperative command of winter itself, and even then delayingly.

But in the downright mountain valleys, where the sun sinks below the horizon two or three hours after its meridian; where the close and bitter neighbourhood of heights covered with snow fills the air with icy particles; where the summer trees, uncomforted by the genial warmth of soil or atmosphere, and beleaguered by the cold blasts and early sleet that in the high regions anticipate winter, soon lose their rapidly-discolouring foliage, autumn is more sudden and conclusive. A few

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CHAPTER XIII

PUFFING, QUESTIONABLE IN ITS EFFECTS — THE FLYING BISHOP—THE CAPULET—THE FARANDOULE—PHILOSOPHERS SANS LE SAVOIR — PEOPLE AND PLACES — THE SECULEJO — ITS REMARKABLE BEAUTY — PASTORAL FEUDS—A SUPPER AND A DREAM.

Among the mountain wonders of this charming country is the Lac d'Oo, of which report makes tales that sound like the pretty gossipings of the fairies.

It has been questioned whether an object, pleasing or beautiful in itself, is or is not enhanced by puffing. With respect to scenery, I should say not; cried up scenery is judged in general with severity; we are less influenced in our opinions by the judgment of others, than by association, comparison, and those fine links of feeling with whose mechanism we are ourselves unacquainted. In most cases, it is the same with respect to personal beauty; previous crying up, naturally raises expectations which it is always difficult, and sometimes

impossible to justify. Yet, perhaps, we are oftener inclined to view it through the eyes of others, than we are willing to acknowledge.

It once happened that a gentleman, travelling alone, chanced to fall in with a family going the same way, and to become (as often happens in such cases) acquainted with its members. Sometime afterwards this same person stumbled on an old friend, to whom he expatiated on his good fortune in having been the occasional companion of such very agreeable people; adding, in the hackneyed English phrase, "Miss —— is an uncommonly nice girl"—"Nice girl!" exclaimed his friend; "I admire your idea of nice girls. Why she is the handsomest person in England,—that's all." The man turned round, looked again, and worshipped.

But this has certainly nothing to do with the Lac d'Oo, though it has grown out of its subject, I hardly know how, except that having heard it prodigiously praised, I was led to think whether profuse panegyric has the effect of engendering disappointment, or creating a favourable disposition which may go half-way towards realizing its own pre-conceived expectations. Much, probably, de-

pends on the construction of the mind: some people hate praise, which they cannot appropriate, and warring against it under every form but one, find sufficient cause for disliking others in the very circumstance of their popularity. Others, having no opinion of their own, hang their acquiescence on some established hook, and are content to be blown by the wind without inquiring where it comes from.

The valleys de l'Oueil and de l'Arboust, the first which present themselves in going to the Lac d'Oo, are fresh and fertile; but as we advanced, the fancy had not much to work upon. The village of St. Aventin must not be passed without a word of its sponsor, a Spanish bishop and great worker of miracles, who lived in a castle—or tower, which still decorates a bold peak just below the heavens; and who, being attacked in his strong-hold by an army of infidels, made a spring across the whole stretch of the valley, and landed upon a stone which even now bears the impression of his foot,—for he seems to have come down upon one only.

What a sight it must have been to passing travellers—if such were abroad, when looking upwards they beheld the flying bishop careering

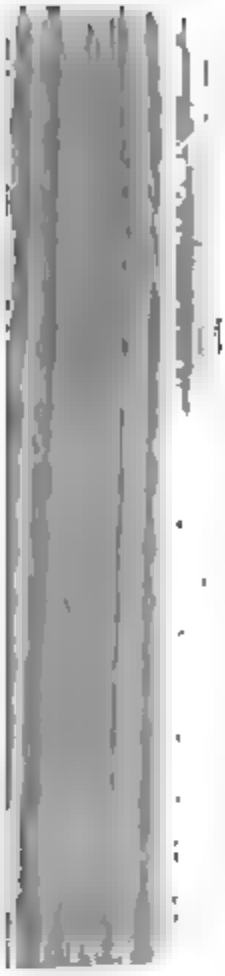
through the air,—not like the cross of Constantine, visible only to the selected one, but obvious to all eyes. After having performed many miracles, this holy man suffered martyrdom; and three hundred years after his death, his body having been discovered by a stray cow, a chapel was erected over it, which still shines out in all the glory of white-wash. Travellers are requested in three different places to remember the chapel, which probably means the priest,—a good-humoured man, who stood by smiling kindly, yet triumphantly, as if he would have said, "Poor things! you have no flying bishops in your shabby religion."

Scenery rather austere than grand. In the villages the married women wear a black capulet, and look like the professional mourners at an Irish wake; and the old ones a long-eared white mob, with lappets hanging on the shoulders, and another —a black one, over it. Groupes of these funereal figures formed the live-stock of the village of Oo, a watery desolate-looking place,—at least in the month of October; but they did not seem a whit the less gay for their mourning gear, which habit had probably brightened into rose-colour. The fashion of wearing black prevails in the Pyrenees;

it is in many parts the general dress of the country women; the market of Pau swarms with black cloth capulets, which, though set off with the narrow facing of velvet, are still monumental head-dresses, but with a certain antique and original effect that at first sight is very striking.

I can imagine a very fine woman looking superb in this black hood, she would have such a high lady-abbess air; and who were more magnificent than those monastic queens in their serge robes?—not real ones in their purple and ermine. Only hear how they sound. Charlotte de la Tremouille, abbess of Marmoustiers; Gabrielle de la Rochechouart, abbess of Fontevrault; the illustrious Lady Blanchefleur, daughter of an emperor; and the Lady Amicie—Montfort and Montmorenci—both in one. I have others higher and more sonorous even than these in my head, but they do not come to my pen.

Our merry mourners of Oo were no specimens of splendour, monachal or otherwise; but, as I have already said, as gay as larks. Shoals of young girls passed us on their way to Bagnères, where they were going to hear mass, buy *colifichets*, and dissipate soberly; while five or six, who preferred



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could be got to pass it; upon which our guide, whipping off her black hood, threw it over the animal's head, and led it by triumphantly. Oo, like other villages here, has its feudal spectre looking down upon it in the shape of a tower; but no traditions, or I should rather say, none intelligible to strangers, to whom patois is as inaccessible as papyrus. And what is a tower without a legend? a thing unfinished,

"Like a cat without a tail,"

or a charade without a solution.

The inhabitants of these pastoral valleys seem kindly disposed, and often greeted us lovingly as we passed, with pleasant smiles and words which had a good-humoured sound, though we could not understand their import. Some of the girls were fair-complexioned and comely, but the expressive southern head is no longer visible. The hamlets are usually agreeably placed, and at a distance contrived, by the help of their warm roofs of purple slate, (common in the Pyrenees,) to look comfortable; but the near view is often disenchanting. The sashless windows at once convert the house into an unfinished shell,—to the eye at least, and damp all our notions of household snugness.

A monotony of ash trees cruelly peeled. It is inconceivable how these mutilated trees spoil *bits* of the landscape—not *stretches*, or we should grow too angry for enjoyment. But the last reach of the valley d'Oo is powerful from its solitude and wildness. I have seen a 'St. John preaching in the desert,' with just such a back-ground. The lake is beautifully approached, in a fine wild way; the mountains are grand, and here again the beech covers their indented sides, and broad pastures extend over their spreading base. As we entered the gorge, a flock of two or three hundred sheep took up the path before us: a single shepherd, whose melancholy mien attracted our attention, guided their movements; he was in the prime of life and singularly handsome, with something grand and meditative in his air and countenance, which in those days when the sons of kings guarded their father's flocks, might have been called royal. There are heads that belong to the desert, and heads that belong to the drawing-room; each would be out of place in the other's sphere, but the first would be only un-niched, the last ridiculous. Our shepherd, transplanted into a brilliant circle, would look like a hero of antiquity, or per-

haps a rebel chief, a sublime incognito from some foreign land of turbulence,—but the 'curled darling' among the sheep!

Gathered rhododendron still in bloom. On the high pastures, the branches of the rhododendron are often the shepherd's only fuel, its crimson blossom the only life-tint that brightens the dark herbage, unless the blue iris comes to share its solitude. There were none to-day; but I found a beautiful—and to me unknown—yellow flower, which my guide (who volunteered taking care of it) lost. After winding some time among rocks crested with beech and pine, we came suddenly upon the lake, which surprised us by the fulness of its beauty. For once at least the preluding trumpets had not spoiled the effect of the show, and the praise which we had imagined exaggerated, was more than justified by the scene.

The popular name of the lake is not its real one; it is not the Lac d'Oo, but the Seculejo, and beautifully it lies in the hollow of the encircling mountains, deep, and still,* and clear; with the dark hills, the clouds, the blue of heaven reflected from its bosom. In the centre of the majestic

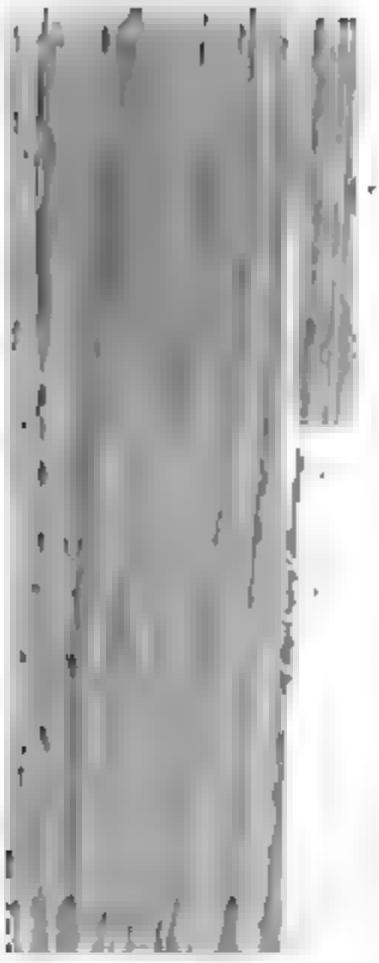
* Not always still, they say.

circus, a cascade drops from a height of eight hundred feet, proving how the great fall of Gavarnie would gain in grandeur and decisive effect if, instead of being condemned to a corner, it had occupied a similar position. Behind the fall, rises a lofty peak covered with snow, that overlooks a higher and more sterile desert; in this desert are two smaller lakes which we did not see, but imagined them in their stillness, with the shadow of the eagle's wing upon their surface, and the rebounding stone, detached from its poise by the fleet foot of the izard, making thunder of the echoes. The ascent to these lakes is a sort of ladder of rocks called the Scala: one (l'Espingo) is the source of the cascade; the other, (the Savuncat) is of smaller dimensions, and its waters of such extreme coldness, that nothing living can inhabit them.

But below, and within the sweet compass of the Seculejo and its shores, all is gracious majesty and sylvan loveliness. It was mid-day when we sat down beside its waters,—the Dryades slept, and the winds with them; nothing spoke but the voice of the torrent. In former times, when I used to believe in Pan and the wood-gods, such a scene

would have set me dreaming for a year and a day; and yet the eyes, accustomed to the dimensions of the Swiss and Italian lakes, or the continuous and expansive beauty of Windermere or Loch Lomond, the Seculejo (which is here called a large lake) would seem only a cabinet picture, but one in which the high finish has not impaired the paramount character of grandeur. Its limited, though proud confines do not admit of any other changes of scenery than those ineffably beautiful ones (changes however of aspect, not of scene) produced by the varying lights of heaven, and the colouring of the air. There are no bays, no velvet lawns, no pebbly strand; but a fine downward rush of mountains, and something so remote and sweet, so high up in the hills, and so sequestered without being austere, that its sight dilates the mind. In the bosom of the silent mountains, in the grand and grave simplicity of nature, the heart finds that fulness of repose which, without dressing itself out as enjoyment, is the fruition of delight.

A flock of Arragonian sheep hung on the rocks above our heads, and the wild dog that guarded it barked at us angrily. Before the breaking out of the cholera at Bordeaux, this flock had been sent



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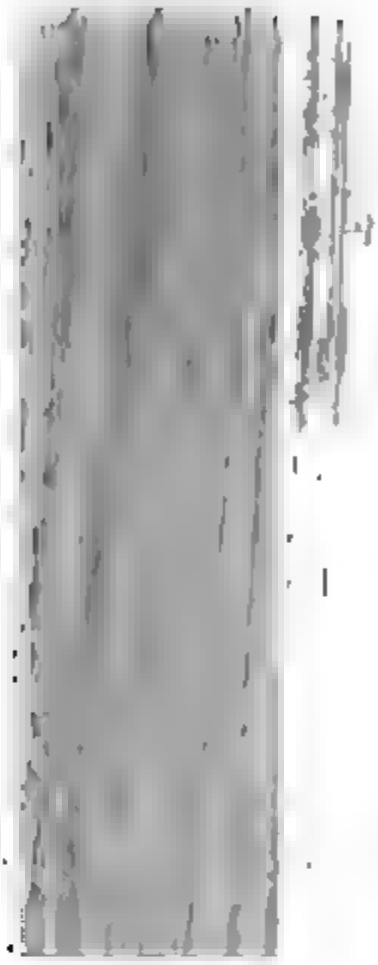
O, how glad I was to awake and find it morning! but the song still rang on my ear, and I repeated it unknowingly as my eyes opened. I wish I had not dreamt this dream,—for I know how it will hang upon me till a letter comes to break the spell.

I once asked a little girl of six years old, who had never seen the sea, what she fancied it was like; she said, "the air." Had she been somewhat older, and that I had asked her what a dream was like, she would perhaps have replied, "the clouds," —the clouds that float over the surface of the sky as dreams do over the mind, taking all shapes, all hues; but shapes that break off or melt into others before they become perfect, and hues that die in their brightness—die unaccomplished, turning to dimness before the eye can repose upon their splendour; or shift into forms that, while they seem remembered ones, are lost in confusion.



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Spanish people, its Spanish dances, its pleasant music, and its Shakspeare memory. Those who are ambitious of mountain renown, or who love to contemplate nature in her aspect of glory, climb to the summits of the Maladetta and the Mont Perdu; but those

" Whose baser stars do shut them up in wishes,"

are obliged to content themselves with more accessible pastures—but wild ones too, and sweet; with magic in them for the fancy, and thought, majesty, and power for the mind. Many ladies achieve the Tourmalet, passing over the mountain from Barèges to Bagnères, some la Brêche de Roland, all, or nearly all, the Pic du Midi; but the Maladetta and the Mont Perdu set their activity at defiance. These monarch mountains reveal their mysteries only to the eyes of man; and all who seek for Pyrenean fame, make it a point to ascend one or the other,—perhaps both.

The weather is evidently changing, and as we dread being caught in the snow, we have hastened our departure; and are now adieu-ing to the maidens of the hotel, who are making town curtsies in the midst of the flower-pots, while their father, a renowned *chef*, thanks for past favours, and

hopes for future ones. We have already taken leave of the leafless trees, the deserted baths, the valleys and the mountains of Luchon, and of the deep-toned poetry of its autumnal scenery; but not of the thoughts which grew up whilst we looked on it, nor of the forest-dream that crossed us in the dark path like a sunbeam. We are turning our backs on the unicorn of the Maladetta, the shy izard, and the bears and bear-hunters of this land of Esau,—and just at the moment when the sport seems to be at its point of perfection. Last night there was a *grande battue:* no less than forty turned out to intercept the movements of two weary old prowlers, who are known to be in the forest behind the Hospice; the chase is dangerous but exciting, and, like every thing that is so, followed with enthusiasm. The master of the Hospice, who was one of my chairmen, told me that in winter, when the snow lies deep upon the ground, and the house would, but for constant care, be half buried under it, he comes down to warmer quarters at Barèges; but being obliged by his tenure to leave behind a stock of provision and fuel for the use of such travellers as may happen to pass that way, visits it every day, and never

fails to find the value of whatever has been consumed in his absence, deposited in some conspicuous part of the dwelling.

As a watering-place, Bagnères de Luchon, though much frequented by families from Toulouse and other towns of nearer neighbourhood, is not so generally known or visited by strangers, or even by the French who come from distant quarters, as Barèges, Cauteretz, St. Sauveur, or Bagnères de Bigorre; and yet the eminent beauty of the surrounding scenes might well attract the lover of grand and solitary nature, or charm the worshippers of its softer aspects. Of late it has counted a few English among its visitors, and even at this advanced season one family still remains. It is silent now, and decidedly melancholy, but not unpleasingly so; there are no noisy contrasts interrupting the harmony of nature, the leaves fall silently, the air becomes insensibly coloured—not stained, by the gathering vapours. If the stillness of the forest be disturbed, it is by sylvan and congenial sounds; the character of melancholy, not of gloom, rests upon it, impressed by the decline of nature, not the actions of man; a revel to the mind, but a blank to the stormy passions, affecting

the one with deep and intense delight, awakening it to faith, subduing it to reflection, but offering no food to the fiercer emotions of the soul.

The springs of the Pyrenees appear, by the evidence of certain fragments dug up in their vicinity, to have been known to the Romans; and in the time of Francis the First we have seen that his sister Margaret of Navarre favoured Cauteretz, as Catherine the sister of Henri Quatre, and his mother the Reinne Jeanne, did Les Eaux Bonnes in later days. Barèges was, I believe, brought into fashion by Madame de Maintenon, who accompanied the illegitimate hope of her royal master, afterwards husband, the young Duc de Maine, to its baths, and so gave it celebrity.

These springs differ materially in strength; and a course of the weaker ones are often taken preparatory to beginning the stronger. Those of Eaux Bonnes and Cauteretz, are reputed particularly efficacious in complaints of the lungs; as those of Eaux Chaudes, Bagnères de Bigorre, St. Sauveur, Cauteretz, and Bagnères de Luchon, for rheumatism, paralysis, and various other maladies. The waters of Barèges are unrivalled in their effects in wounds, maladies of the skin, &c. These

waters are generally employed both externally and internally—those of Eaux Bonnes alone excepted, which are rarely used as baths; and when they are, require artificial heating.

More English are said to visit Barèges than any other Pyrenean spring, but with a view to health rather than amusement. In winter it is no longer habitable; but, like the Hospice at the foot of the Venasque, has its guardians, who look to it, and give notice when a torrent breaks loose, or an avalanche detaches itself.

The mode of living is, I believe, nearly the same at all the baths: it is easy and agreeable, temperately gay, and pleasantly unceremonious. Bagnères de Bigorre being more of a town than any other of the bath establishments, has perhaps least of that kind of family union which distinguishes the social circles of Cauteretz; and is (we have been told) the order of the day at all the popular springs that may be said to belong especially to the mountains, and which, from their retired positions, and the scrutiny that strangers necessarily undergo in small places, are not so likely to be the haunts of doubtful or speculating characters as Bagnères de Bigorre. For though self-created

counts and anticipated decorations are not altogether unknown, yet people meet together and form acquaintance with a certain feeling of security which is very agreeable. Bagnères de Bigorre alone boasts a theatre, the other baths have not got beyond Punch and Judy; but the less harmless amusement of play is carried on at all. Few things contribute more to the comfort of an invalid in the Pyrenees than the *chaise à porteur*, which is at once the gentlest, safest, and most agreeable mode of conveyance imaginable; and possesses an immense superiority over the excruciating *char à banc*, or hard-going and sometimes (as I can testify) dangerous horse of Switzerland.

I have always found it difficult to compare the impression which distant objects have left upon my mind, with the livelier image of present ones. As at every moment I hear the Pyrenees and Switzerland compared, and the question of "which do you like the best?" repeated, I often try to put their valleys side by side before me, and by opposing them to each other, form some estimate of their respective claims.

The scenery of Switzerland has, generally speaking, a higher character of grandeur than that of

the Pyrenees, but I think it is less Arcadian: here the southern atmosphere gives a warmth and tenderness to the landscape which approaches it more nearly to the glowing, yet gentle hues with which those poets and painters, from whom our first ideas of Arcadia have been taken, loved to imbue their pictures. A higher character of sublimity belongs unquestionably to Switzerland, it is the very head and front of her pretensions; but in the comparison of pastoral and romantic beauty, the scenery of the Pyrenees sustains itself successfully.

The valleys here are deep, fresh, and delicious; they are more sequestered, more sylvan, and more southern, not only in their climate, but in their vegetation, than those of Switzerland; their streams are perhaps clearer, their verdure more varied, but they sometimes want the wide and unrestricted foliage of those broad trees which in Switzerland dip their branches into the clear lake, and casting their shadows over the sides of the hills, make elysiums of every green spot. But though there appears to me to be more single trees of proud dimensions in Switzerland, yet there are more summer woods here, more green forests; less dependence on the black pine, and an absence of those contrasts which

often displease the eye by their hard and sudden apparition; the harmony of nature is never rudely or jerkingly interrupted, the beautiful middle tints never wanting; and yet there is no monotony in this flow of hues, no more than in the tinting of the rainbow.

But it is not the woods, but the lakes, which form the great distinctive feature. Switzerland glories in her lakes, in their vastness, variety, and splendour; there the beautiful basins of the Gaube and the Seculejo, though perfect as single pictures, would scarely have a dot assigned to them on a map of the country. Nothing becomes mountain scenery like the pure and solitary lake; they were formed for each other, and when dissevered, each loses a portion of its dignity and beauty.

The lonely bay of Fluellen, the majestic shores of Wallenstadt, Thoun with its congregation of mountains, and the head and foot of the classical Leman, seem made to put out all weaker pretensions; and thinking of them, one feels almost inclined to exclaim with regret, "there are no lakes in the Pyrenees." And yet there is something almost fabulously beautiful about those small mountain mirrors; even the character of entireness

and lonely appropriation which they derive from their limited size and unvarying features, has a certain charm in it that deeply affects the imagination. They have neither hut or hamlet on their silent shores; they belong only to the shepherd and his flock: if they are visited by spirits of earth or air, they must be sylvan and gentle ones. A young faun may pipe on the shores of the Seculejo at evening, and a water-nymph put back her hair and listen to the magic of his strain; but there is no abiding place for the gloomy phantoms of the northern desert or the frozen lake. Even the bleaker Gaube, walled in by the Vignemale with its snows and its glaciers, and filled with the solemn music of the gale as it sweeps over its waters, or rushes through a chasm in the mountains, is not austere; it is lonely, and melancholy in its loneliness, but not repelling.

It seems to me, that the snow mountains of Switzerland are another mark, and a grand one. I have not seen any here that wear their virgin mantle in such a perfection of purity: from the glittering summit down to the ample base not a bare spot, not a dark one visible; all white and cold when the sun blazes on them; all steeped at

its setting in that unimaginable rose colour, that pure and living light, of which no words can give an idea, when the mountains seem like entire masses of pale red topaz, that while we linger on their magical beauty, almost believing them palaces raised by enchantment, fade again into the same cold white—the spectral white—which, as it stands out from a gloomy back-ground, or receives the pale moonbeams on its paler surface, looks like something too awfully mysterious for human scrutiny. The great mountains here, on whose lofty front the snow becomes eternal, belong to the desert, they do not form a familiar and stationary feature. They do not look in upon a scene of garden sweetness as the Jungfrau does at Interlaken, nor terminate town-views as the glittering chain of the Oberland Alps does from the terrace of Berne; but there is a spirit of romance in these sequestered valleys, a depth and perfectness of solitude, an absence of the world, and a presence of the poetic feeling, which, like the fabled waters of life, bring back youth to the heart, and recreate within it the precious but evanescent faculty of receiving intense delight from simple objects.

Most of the finest things, all the most popular ones, the valley of the Haut Reuss, Lauterbrunnen, Engelberg, Grindenwald, the valley of Sarnen, the deep bays and wooded coves of Fluellen, Brunen, and Kussnacht, the glens and forests that surround Lucerne, are all accessible from certain points, either to a carriage of ordinary dimensions, or else to the narrow *char à banc;* lakes must be sometimes navigated, but this, in summer, is a luxurious mode of travelling that rather invites than deters the crowd, who, when landed at Brientz or Newhaus, wedge into cars without springs, and jolt on to Meyringhen or Interlaken. Thus the high mountain passes are alone kept sacred by natural obstacles, as they are often, by the apprehension of danger, from the timid foot-step. Wherever there are deciduous trees, or grass, or flowers, there are roads,—or at least the exceptions are rare, and in general confined to the passes of what may be called the summer Alps; and the solitudes which procreate thought must be sought in the stony desert, in the region of glaciers, or in those illimitable worlds of snow which nature has barred against all but such as are willing to brave danger for her sake.

If the Pyrenees were the road to Italy, Gavarnie would be speedily—for it might be easily—made accessible to carriages; and then my Bible desert, my grand and desolate Marboré, would become a fashionable circus. Other valleys which have the power of road-making within them, would be generalized and neutralized in the same way,—every path dissected, pic-nic'd, lithographed; every mystery unveiled, every doubt made a certainty; all clear and clean as pavement after a summer deluge, not enough of earth left in the interstices to keep our fancies together; and so its Arcadian character of solitude and stillness, its deep and beautiful loneliness, would be talked, and rode, and driven over and away,—the bloom rubbed off its freshness, and its sweet secrets made mere town talk. There are prophets—false ones I hope, who predict the approach of this state of things, even without the help of an Italy at the other side of the mountains; but at present the rumbling char à banc is altogether unknown, and many of the most romantic spots are only accessible to the small mountain horse, or the sure-footed chairman.

It is to this circumstance that the valley of the

Pont d'Espagne, Gavarnie, and many others, owe their Juan Fernandez air of stillness and seclusion. None of the charming things about Bagnères de Bigorre—the valley of Campan excepted,—are attainable to a char à banc; nor, as far as we have seen, about Bagnères de Luchon either. In point of country feeling and picturesque beauty, much is gained by this circumstance, and in point of comfort and convenience also,—for the chairmen will go any where, and every where; and instead of being racked and jolted in a dislocating machine, those who cannot walk and fear to ride, are carried about like petted children, without the risk of fatigue or probability of danger, and with the powers of observation free, and undistracted by the pick-step feel which sends your startled thoughts into the feet of your mule, or the wheels of your char à banc.

In the long vale which extends from Luz to Gavarnie, the ear is rarely startled by a sound more worldly than the slow tramp of a mule,—unless it be the human voice, which in these solitudes is seldom exalted above the pitch of admiration. If a noise is heard approaching, it is the pattering of a flock of sheep, or the growling of the

shepherd's dog, or the cordial cheer of the herdsman returning from the hills with his wine-skin and kettle on his shoulder, or the fleet step of the izard hunter, or the caressing remonstrance of the peasant girl who tries to coax her refractory nag into a by-path while the travellers pass. This character of quiet remoteness is deeply impressed, and lingers on the fancy as a sweet perfume does upon the senses, mixed up with the recollection of the spot itself, and poetizing its freshness.

Sometimes in the wide valleys the rivers have but little influence on the landscape; nor are they, generally speaking, rivers of such might and moment as those of Switzerland. In the exquisite view from St. Savin, the Gave is almost lost in the breadth of the valley, and the Adour is a feature of small importance in the landscape of Campan; but in the closer glens, the torrent and its rocky frame-work form strong points in the picture; the pure and abundant stream rushes on—sometimes dimpling, and eddying, and sparkling in the sunbeams, but oftenest battling its way through a deep and rocky ravine, into whose mysteries the eye cannot penetrate. The sides of this ravine are often bare and vertical, but overhung at top with

wild foliage; at others, shaded to the brink of the torrent by thick fantastic trees, growing out of the fissures of the rocks, and spreading their prodigal branches over it.

Looking down from the suspended ledge, which often winds like a ribbon up and down the sides of the mountains, cascades of considerable beauty are sometimes caught by the eye as it follows the stream in its windings,—now clear, swift, shallow, —then deep and still, or fierce and foaming; at one moment lost behind the point of a rock, or in the whirl of a cauldron; and the next, dallying with the old roots or wild bushes on its brink, rippling and murmuring, and then flying off again on its wild errand. Sometimes the mountains hem in the torrent, sometimes they recede from it, leaving bright openings and charming meadows, where the cottage and its small dependencies bask in the midst of bubbling springs and green pastures.

Except the wide valleys (pastoral and agricultural) all have a similar character, though differing of course in majesty, as the mountains differ in magnitude and grandeur of form. These wide valleys have prodigious beauty, and are, I think,

unequalled by any scenes of the same character in Switzerland. Many will award to its closer valleys the pre-eminence in beauty, as well as in sublimity; and with the gems of Lauterbrunnen, the fair Haute Reuss, and their sweet and majestic comates set in their hearts, may perhaps come here hardened by previous influences against the impression which the deep glens and romantic gorges of the Pyrenees would otherwise produce. But wherever in its landscape the horizon takes a wide scope and lets in distance, then the southern atmosphere colours magically, and the vague purple that individualizes southern scenery, and with which all who have marked the aërial lights on the high Appenines are familiar, flushes with such sweet warmth the face of nature, that we are apt, after having revelled in its fulness, to find the fancy chilled by the clear and acutely defined palpabilities of the Swiss mountains.

The beautiful transparency of their streams and rivers is a point of honour with the inhabitants of the Pyrenees, who speak with contempt of what they call the turbid waters of Switzerland. I search my memory for a standard of comparison, but cannot find one. I remember the sparkling

purity of its lakes, limpid down to their fathoms, and fathoms-deep encrusted pavement, the exquisite green of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, and the liquid crystal of the Reuss at Lucerne:—I say nothing of the Rhone, because it only becomes blue at Geneva, when it makes its take-leave visit. This is a scanty catalogue of recollections, and makes me angry with my memory for not furnishing me with a better; for I have an old and dear love for Switzerland, and should grieve to do it even tacit injustice. Yet I fear that *the bill is found*; for the clear waters that rush by here at every step, that distil from every rock, and are dispersed through every meadow, make themselves immediately remarkable by their beautiful transparency, which I cannot recollect to be the case (though it may be nevertheless) in that land of pleasant memories

Notwithstanding the scantiness of the soil in the mountain districts of the Pyrenees, and the heat of the climate, an intense verdure is often produced here by constant irrigation—intense, but not monotonous; a mixed cultivation frequently breaks up its uniformity by those 'pattern-book' diversities, in whose many hues the eye finds an agree-

able variety which the universal green excludes. I speak now of the high Pyrenees,—the mountain country; the valleys of Béarn have another character. I have already gossiped of their charming meadows,—flowery, before the scythe comes, as the Prato Fiorito; and after it has passed over them, fresh, green, and smooth as our English lawns. I have spoken too of their noble oaks, which, though often condescending to make hedge-rows, are not the less splendid in their singleness, or less proudly umbrageous when two or three make fellowship together; and of the surpassing beauty of the deep glens and charming côteaux that make a paradise of the neighbourhood of Pau. But the mountain Pyrenees have another character, though still preserving in their wild and impressive solitudes—often even in the vicinity of their highest mountains, a warmth and tenderness of colouring entirely southern.

Pastoral poets and landscape painters would, perhaps, prefer the Pyrenees to Switzerland; its scenery is softer, warmer, more Arcadian; it has more richness and glow, a finer fusion of tints, and more harmony of tone than usually belongs to the strong contrasts and decided outlines of Swiss

landscape; but it has not the same generally daring character, the same universal strength and mightiness. None will refuse to admit that there is great force and sublimity in the high regions of the Pyrenees, when the lonely majesty of nature enthrones itself in the desert; all will allow the infinite—the ineffable beauty of the softer part of Switzerland; but it is of the general character of each country that I speak, not of individual scenes.

The sentiment inspired by the contemplation of nature in Switzerland is often profoundly melancholy; there is awe in it, and great grandeur. The soul no longer looks through a glass darkly, but stands face to face with those high intelligences, of which before it had only gleams. But there is too much coming and going, too much jostling and crowding, too much talking of scenes and projects, for the full indulgence of the intense and solitary feeling which seeks in a world of its own the sympathies that quadrate with its newly-winged desires: but this, it is true, is the fault, not of place, but circumstance. In the Pyrenees the general aspect of nature is

softer, and—if I may say so—more touching; it acts more upon the affections of the heart, and links itself more with our ordinary and human feelings; while we dwell upon it, the mind, full of belief, of happiness, of confirmation, bears upwards; yet with a love of the beautiful earth, a sentiment of its delights, a willingness to linger on it, as if it were another word for heaven: while in the loftier and more solemn regions of the Swiss mountains, it flutters to disengage itself from the interests of life, and tries to lose its present identity in the wide opening which heaven seems to make for it.

Both are admirable; the one is like a sweet bird of beautiful plumage and delightful song—a bird of paradise, who can fly high and nobly; but loves to build his nest in summer trees, and dip his wings in the clear brook. If he sometimes sings at heaven's gate, he is heard too in the woods at evening, and in corn-fields and meadows when the sun goes down, piping his sweet lay of peacefulness and joy. The other finds its symbol in the eagle, who makes his aerie on the highest peak, who salutes the sun boldly and with open

eyes, whose kingly delights are in solitary empire and elementary commotion; but who does not disdain to hover over the deep waters of the lake, or haunt the rocks of the forest, sailing above with his broad wings gloriously expanded,—sublime in war, gravely beautiful in peace, but loving better to furrow his beak in snow than amidst flowers.

CHAPTER XV.

NATURAL PICTURES—ST. GAUDENS—ST. MARTIN—IL N'Y A PLUS DE PYRENEES — TOULOUSE — FIRST EFFECT — CANAL DU MIDI — PAST INFLURNCE STILL PRESENT — LYRIC AMATORY POETRY — BURNS AND THE TROUBADOURS—THE PHYSICIAN—A CAUTION—TOWN STUDENTS —BATTLE OF TOULOUSE — THE OFFICER'S TOMB—THEATRE—FANATICISM — CHURCHES—INTOLERANCE—PAUCITY OF SHOWS — CLEMENCE ISAURE—DUC DE MONTMORENCI — LA BELLE PAULE — GESSE — ENVIRONS — CANAL — AUTUMN PICTURES — COUNTRY TO CARCASSONNE.

I NEVER beheld such an image of joy as presents itself to us at this moment under the shape of a trio of mules in a state of nature, galloping after each other over meadow, through stream, up one lane, down another; ears erect, head thrown up, snuffing the all-sufficing air, and spurning the earth as if it clogged their movements. They are beautiful as the wild ass in the Scriptures, and picture freedom as a caged bird does captivity; just three such mules as in the good times of the

fairies would have served for a godmother's present. But there is no magic now, no sweet story-book illusions; every thing is accounted for from Brutus down to Mrs. A——.*

Another natural picture hangs near this bright one. Three little children have found out a bit in a garden, a robin red-breast corner; one a boy of five years old holds a baby in his careful arms, with that sweet important look, which children, when they feel that a charge is entrusted to them, put on so prettily. Another lifts up the gaunt dog (whose gentle eye shows old and fond companionship) by the fore paws, and walks him forward on the hind ones; the third and youngest (baby excepted) stands still, with one arm across the eyes and the other dropped down by the side—not lankly, but with the roundly-chiselled grace of a Cupid on an antique frieze. Suddenly the dog disengages itself, and springs off in hot pursuit of something that stirs in the bushes; no ravenous wolf more eager in the chase,—but soon at fault, makes a wide wheel round, and sobering as he does so, trots back to have his tail pulled, and be set dancing by the children.

* Vide Sir David Brewster's letter to Sir Walter Scott.

How beautifully are strength and gentleness combined in the character of a dog,—the faithful servant, the trustworthy guardian and loving playfellow of his master's children, but the fierce enemy of the invader. I remember a huge Newfoundlander with whom I was once intimately acquainted,—a wrathful monster, who would have torn a thief to pieces, and was the terror of every one who approached it; yet suffered the children of the house to stuff flowers into his ears, and put his hair in papers.

The beauty of Betrin peeped out from her door as we stopped to change horses, with a sort of Greek-slave air, and a sooty madrass bound round her forehead; while a dear little baby—a dew-drop of a brat, in a beggar-woman's arms, made loving acquaintance with E——, cooing to her like a turtle dove, that had a dash of the saucy sparrow in it; its pretty tricks made us all laugh, to the great delight of its poor mother. Could make nothing of the country to St. Gaudens, for the rain effaced every thing. They say the town is pleasantly situated, but when spouts and gutters run like rivulets, and the market-place is roofed with umbrellas, it is no easy matter to judge; too

dark and wet to see the cathedral, which is very old and (they say) interesting. A comfortless barrack of an inn to the eye, but good beds and rather a *recherché* dinner; a sort of daintiness in the dishes which the general appearance of the house was far from announcing.

Country agreeable to St. Martin, a small town hanging prettily over the river; farther on it declines desperately. For a long way the Pyrenees have kept us company, but we begin to distance them. This morning, as I looked through my wishing-glass, and always towards the Bagnères de Bigorre quarter, I fancied that I could trace the outline of its mountains, and strained my eyes to find out some familiar peak which might tell me whereabouts the town lay, that I might say to myself, "there they are, the dearly beloveds, behind that summit;" but on consulting my map, I found that, like the president Dupaty, who saw the lake of Thrasymene at the Radicofane side of the Appenines, I was out in my geography, and had looked the wrong way. At present I may say, though not in the spirit of Louis the Fourteenth, "Il n'y a plus de Pyrénées!"

Having lost these skyey outlines, the rest of the

country towards Toulouse seems somewhat worse than negative; flat as a billiard-table as we advance, with the exception of a low ridge now and then which goes for nothing. I speak of beauty only, and with a saving clause of respect for what I understand to be remarkable—its great fertility. The châteaux within view are sad castles of discomfort, the campagnes worse; I remarked two, each with the embellishment of a huge straw stack planted exactly in the middle of the avenue which led to the entrance door, so as to interdict all approach; the actual road was probably over the ploughed fields. Yet some have a look, half farm, half manor house, that is not amiss; and others that vast unhusbanded extension which sometimes indicates a thick and social family population, and perhaps as often presents the lonely image of unappropriated space.

Houses, as we advance, somewhat Italian;—a square tower shouldering a slanting roof, then another roof projecting from the first, or a turret starting up in the middle, with roofs growing up round it like two or three houses of unequal height glued together; gardens enclosed by raw mud walls,—an ugly new-settlement feature, of

which a summer or two may perhaps make hedges, though they look as if intended to remain in their original nudity. With my strong leaning to time-beaten towns, the ancient part of Toulouse was sure to impress me favourably: its old bricks, old walls, old towers, and old gateways leading to old houses, or perhaps to inhabited ruins, please my preposterous taste; which, were it better organized, would no doubt take more pleasure in that air of order and progressive improvement that denotes internal prosperity, and of which the more modern parts may perhaps present an image. But dark vistas, and stained colouring, and rude architecture—if it be historical—settle on my fancy, and will not be shaken off; while new bits and brushed up patches, flaring out in the midst of their rusty old neighbours, always seem to me eye-sores.

This city of 'la gaie science,'—'le gai savoir,' of 'joyeaux fabliaux,' floral games, golden violets and silver eglatines, the old Tolosa of the Romans and especial ground of the troubadours, famous for its constant love of literature, and infamous for its fanaticism, (singular association!) presents itself under a quiet aspect, in some parts perhaps a sombre one; but there is certainly movement

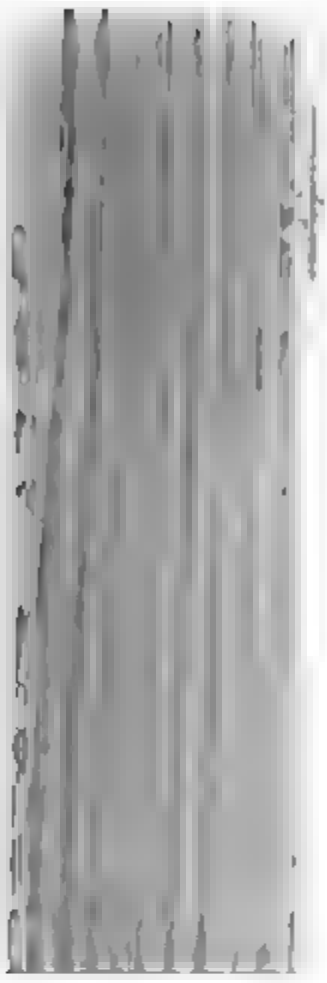
enough in the business streets to convict those of a libel who have called it a desolation. It is not rich in works of art or vestiges of antiquity, but it has recollections, good and bad, of great interest; a vaunted climate, fine walks, a very fine bridge, and from it a clear and splendid view (at least to-day) of my dear Pyrenees. The river has but little to say for itself at present, for there has been no rain here for months; and its eight hundred feet breadth is shrunk into comparative nothingness. But a river is always an agreeable object in a southern climate; though it may not be deep enough for a plunge, we can still dabble, still walk our fancies ankle deep in the old Garonne; and though neither oar nor sail be reflected on its quiet bosom, yet can we still find a pleasant touch of life in the stealing movement, the gentle ripple, and love the sense of freshness communicated by its sight: a charm which it may in some measure owe to the distant view of its mountain cradle, that, making illusion in the mind, blends the first rush of its freed waters with their later and more silent progress.

All the business going on here belongs to the grand canal of Languedoc, which forms a channel

of communication between the ocean and the Mediterranean, taking a whole sweep of cities into a share of its benefits.. This lion of the south, once called the canal of Languedoc, but now, since provinces have been neutralized into departments, Canal du Midi, is considered as one of the wonders of France, both as a work of art, and a proof of what may be consummated by labour and perseverance under the direction of genius. Late years have made us familiar with wonderful things in this way, but this great work of Riquet's* still holds its ground as a prodigious achievement; the granite reservoir of St. Ferreol, nearly a mile in length, is quite Cyclopean.

But this, like other towns of ancient and historical fame, derives its power over the mind more from past than present influences. Music and song, chivalry and devotion, made this "the city of their joy;" and though there seems little now here germane to the long gone-by, yet the memory of its ancient splendour still remains; "maintes belles et doctes chansons" fall upon the ear, and gallant scenes of court and tournament swim before the eyes. The iron crown of feodalism, idealized

* Paul Riquet, Signeur de Bonrepos.



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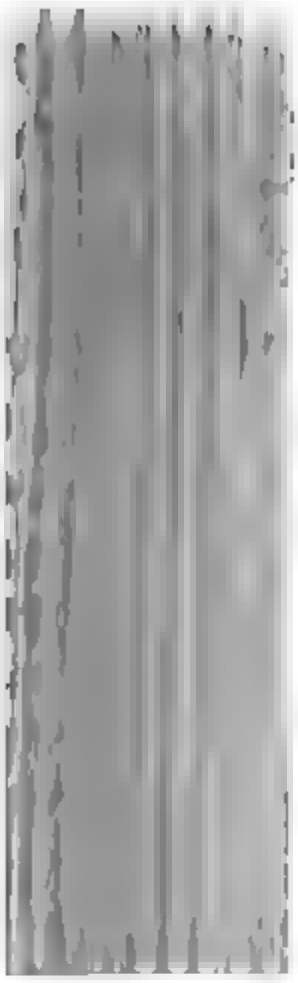
It has often been remarked, that the highest degree of civilization is in general inimical to the sentiment of love in its purest, most devoted, and most exalted sense. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to find a scale by which we can form a correct judgment of the actual refinement of a people, to whose domestic habits and every-day feelings we are almost strangers: for it is by such knowledge, and not by catalogued pomps or recorded ceremonies, that we learn how far the reality of civilization had become ingrained in the feelings, and its spirit circulated through the arteries of general life. So far however we know, that the Greeks, in their gold and purple age, seemed to have felt little of that passion which has profound tenderness, perfect faith, and willing sacrifice for its elements; which elevates its object by the strength of its individual sentiment, and surrounds it with an atmosphere of holiness. The Roman amatory poets, in the palmy days of their great country's gorgeousness, have shown us by their praises what sort of divinities they worshipped. We have seen the goddesses by the light of the incense burned on their altars, and know them to be deformed and impure. The love-poetry of the

Arabs, whose spirit transfused itself into the lays of the troubadour, has been deemed, by those who are thoroughly conversant with its character, to be more imaginative than tender, more full of conceits than passion. If its source was in the desert, its stream had passed through the channels of refinement; it had come with the other arts of peace from courts and capitals, to capitals and courts where love itself had become a system.

Perhaps lyric amatory poetry is most heartfelt, and consequently most perfect, in that stage of society when love fills up the lapses of a life of hazard, or "enamels with pied flowers" the rugged path of interrupted, not perpetual hardship; for perpetual hardship chills the heart, impoverishes the mind, and substituting the necessity of action for the luxury of thought, subdues the imagination by the rude wear-and-tear contact of common life. It is in these delightful intervals that the poetic power learns from the heart to speak its dear and beautiful language. The muse found Burns at the plough amidst the braes of Ayrshire, loving the daisy, listening to the laverock, and adoring nature from the ephemeral field-flower to the sky and its great glories; rough, but not alto-

gether uncultivated; full of the fresh uneducated instinct of beauty, full of deep and passionate tenderness, unsubdued and unperverted by school or college; with a mind steeped in natural images—not savage ones, a fine sympathy with wrongs and rights, and a soft complacency of feeling cherished by the simple civilization of his cottage home,—not to the extirpation of hardier and more ardent sentiments, but to their nobler and more beautiful developement.

Such circumstances were perhaps, of all others, the most favourable to the ripening of his genius. There was nothing beggarly or cramping in his early poverty, nothing meanly vulgar, and every thing free, natural, and lovely in his first associations; and thus bred, he felt himself a poet, and nothing daunted by the want of a refined education or of the habits of society, wrote,—and how? with all the fire of genius, and all the burning ardour and deep pathos of a new heart. Few will dispute the eminence on which the universal voice, —may I not say the universal heart,—has placed him as the bard of real passion. Had he been a troubadour, a titled minstrel at the court of Raymond de Beranger, his instinct of love might have



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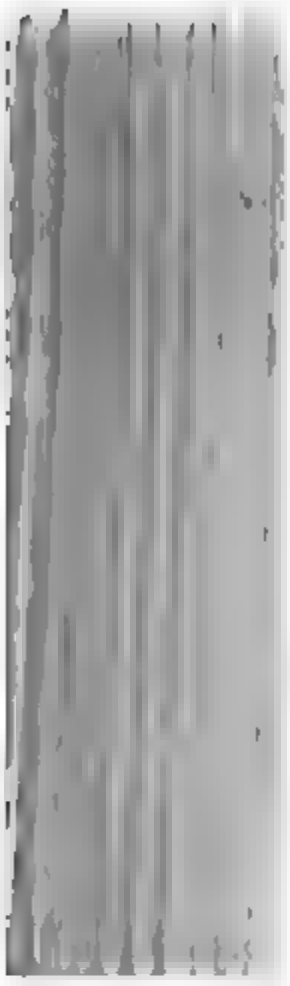
the people of the house might refuse to take her in, but they did not; so we sent immediately for a physician, recommended by our host as the best; and presently a grave yet dapper-looking personage made his appearance, looking as if he had just stepped out of one of Molière's frames,—full suit of black, tail wig, gold-headed cane, and a keen pulse-counting eye, that scarcely needed the aid of the auxiliary finger. But he had no hocus pocus about him, no idea of keeping his patient simmering, or making a job of the matter; in a few hours the fever had subsided, and nothing remained but a little weakness. *Nota bene:* nine French innkeepers out of ten are provided with a medical relation—competent, or otherwise; which *otherwise* being on the cards, the sick traveller's safest way would be, to begin by taking more disinterested information.

Many things in Toulouse recall the old parts of Paris; the best houses often resemble the historical mansions in the distant quarters. It is a rambling old town, but with character about it, and that rusty worn-out look in some parts, that often makes good its claim upon the mind when gayer things fail; at least upon my mind, which finds



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and large horizon, thought, undistracted by the variety or splendour of external objects, finds calm and freedom.

A delight of a day,—and so we took advantage of it, and drove along the banks of the canal into the country; first passing by the field of that superfluous battle,* that barren victory, which left so many breaking hearts behind it,—and none to say, when the talk was of great results, "We owe them to the battle of Toulouse,"—"the battle of Toulouse turned the scale;" none to speak of the benefits conferred upon mankind by the death of the valiant, and which (artificial and misnamed as they so often are) widows call consolation, and orphans glory. Young blood and old was poured out there, as if to make the grass grow, and no more,—a cheaper manure would have done it better.

I have just said that the country was not beautiful; what we have seen this morning is positively the reverse,—or would have been so, but for the sky that pulled it up a little. As we drove along, a neglected but agreeable-looking country place

* The date of the battle of Toulouse was the tenth of April; that of Napoleon's abdication the fourth of the same month.

was pointed out to us, as containing within its woods the tomb of a British officer killed at the battle of Toulouse. I fancied that it might be the grave of Colonel C——, and though I had never seen him, yet the affection which I feel for some members of his family, gave it a more than common interest in my eyes; so we left the carriage, and putting ourselves under the guidance of a man who appeared to be employed about the place, and who strutted before us with an air of confidence as if he himself had been the grave-digger, entered the wood. But after having bewildered us in its mazes, and serpentined us through a dozen windings, all ending in the same point, our cicerone suddenly halted at the statue of some woodland divinity in a comfortable roundabout petticoat, which he gravely assured us was the tomb of the British officer; but seeing that we looked at it more than doubtingly, he became confused, and vanished, while we turned round, through a side alley.

Another man now approached in the working garb of a country mechanic, with a huge cornelian surmounting his watch key. But he soon contrived, and without any vulgar display of dignity,

to let us know that he was himself lord and master: this was good tact, for his dress—certainly not his manners, which were perfectly good,—might have led us into some error embarrassing to both parties. By him we were conducted to the grave, which was not that of Colonel C——, but of another British officer: it was in a dilapidated state, the inscription defaced, the urn mouldering. Our polite guide said that he respected the memory of a brave man even though an enemy, and had planted a cypress at each corner of the tomb; but a cold winter had destroyed them, and some July patriots in a brief effusion, had done the rest.

Went to the theatre in the evening. The square in which it stands, (Place du Capitol,) looked like something at Venice or Naples: booths, cafés, hotels,—all brightly illuminated; women in movement, men in groupes, and the rich sunset glow still lingering in the western sky, as if it waited to bid good-by to the moon, whose poetic orb was just making itself visible. Dress, scenery, and acting respectable; the play Molière's, the house thin, and the audience homely. It was interesting to see the often anathematized *Tartuffe* acted in the same town, which seventy years before

had witnessed the sad and disgraceful tragedy of Calas,—and received with applause, though without enthusiasm.

Fanaticism, both religious and political, is said to be on the wane in the south of France, even in Toulouse,—Toulouse, where wisdom was taught and persecution practised at the same time; where the university and the inquisition sprang up together, and knowledge never succeeded in rooting up intolerance. Hearing this, we think of Duranti and Ramel, and thus thinking, rejoice,—as all reflecting minds must when a popular prejudice, exciting to crime or perpetuating injustice, wears itself out. But how rarely does it do so! Nothing so hard to subdue as a popular prejudice, nothing so awful; it braves laws, it rejects good,—it refused redemption! But there is, in truth, a constant principle of activity, which however it may be kept down, crushed, trampled on, scattered, still reunites its fragments, works upwards—slowly perhaps, but surely, and at length lifts its head above the load which falsehood, injustice, and too ready belief have laid upon it.

When we returned homewards the moon had full empire, and slept upon the old house-tops as if

they were Mount Latmos. Atmosphere warm and balmy (10th of October) as in the middle of summer, and the square twinkling with lights and lanterns as if a swarm of fire-flies had settled on it.

Strolled into the cathedral, having a hankering after old churches, no matter of what age or architecture. Some poor women knelt in the dark corners entirely absorbed in prayer. How often, when on entering a Catholic place of worship such figures have caught my eye, have I wished to kneel down with them and pray too; and how often have I regretted the churlish custom which closes our churches, except at the stated period, the season of premeditated piety, against the overcharged heart, that would fain lay itself and its griefs at the foot of the altar.

There is something peculiar in the architecture of this cathedral, something lop-sided; the choir being in one corner of the nave, instead of in the centre. Saw it again dressed for a fête, its fine nave looking like a coarse curiosity shop; faded tapestry at one side, gaudy pictures at the other; gilt scutcheons, silver ones, and a wilderness of artificial flowers. The church of St. Saturnin (or

Sernin) is very imposing, and the almost twilight in which we saw the interior, greatly aided the effect of its grave and antique architecture. The portal is richly sculptured, and behind the choir is a succession of small chapels lined with carved presses sumptuously gilt, and containing bodies of saints and martyrs enough to furnish a catacomb. The church of La Daurade interested us less, and that of St. Alban, (I think the name was,) pronounced by our lacquey supereminent, being all in darkness when we arrived, was lost to our curiosity; which, however, resigned itself to the disappointment with that sort of tranquillity so apt to grow imperturbable—when sight-seeing is in question—towards the close of a bustling day.

The ancient cities of France are nobly embellished by their grand and dim cathedrals, and the fine gothic character of their ecclesiastical architecture in general. The spirit of religion dwells within the walls of these grave and majestic structures, elevating the mind above the exaggerations of fancy, directing it to the regions of faith, or taming down its audacious flight to the serious tone of humble and confiding piety. The long, unbroken, gradually narrowing, gradually darkening double

line of columns; the atmosphere of holiness; the veiled light falling on the sculptured choir through the amber, purple, or living red of the gorgeous windows that glow like precious stones; the unity of design creating unity of feeling,—altogether combine to produce a grand and simple effect, that effaces by its singleness all that cozenage of art which disturbs thought in *modern edifices*, and beggars by its calm grandeur all the laboured splendour of variety.

In former times, when a sentiment of gross and brutal intolerance was cherished as a pious and praiseworthy feeling, it was the custom here that a Jew should be brought out to the people on every Easter Sunday in the metropolitan church of St. Etienne; there to receive the blows which, according to the barbarous spirit of the age, were annually inflicted on one of those unfortunate children of Israel. And once it happened that Hugues, chaplain to Aimeri Vicomte de Rochechouart,* struck the Jew, "bailla le souflet au Juif," with such ferocity, that his brains fell out upon the earth. The Jews afterwards purchased, by weight of gold, an exemption from this cruel

* Some chroniclers say Aimeri himself.

and debasing custom. Another disgraceful scene is recorded as having taken place in the church of St. Gilles, when Raymond Count of Toulouse, being suspected of favouring the doctrine of the Albigenses, underwent, with a cord round his neck, the ignominious discipline of the church upon his naked shoulders. After which humiliating ceremony, he was deemed sufficiently purified from heretical taint to be enrolled amongst the crusaders, as the persecutors of the new belief were denominated. In the barbarous war of extirpation carried on by those defenders of the faith, a great portion of Languedoc was desolated; massacre was the key to paradise, and the pilgrims burned, sacked,—and praised God!

A sweet morning, with a suspicion of autumn in the air: just enough for softness, and no more. Walked about, and looked again from the bridge, and into various holes and corners. In the way of sight-seeing there is not much to do at Toulouse; its *recommendations* are, its walks, public library and institutions, museum, theatre, climate, facilities for cheap living, and—I should add—churches; its *shows*, the canal, the château d'eau, that supplies the city with water and looks like a

huge pasteboard tower in the midst of the old brick-work that surrounds it, the mill of Basaele, and the Hôtel de Ville; the last borrowing its interest from its associations, but in itself, though exteriorly a handsome building, of little attraction. Saw some good company-rooms fitted up as for a city festival, and in one a throne erected for Napoleon, and ready for the next royal shadow that may fret its hour on the same trapped-door stage. When his 'graced person' honoured the banquet, it might have boasted a temporary splendour; but nothing now remains save a little superfluous upholstery. In one of the saloons is the statue of Clemence Isaure, the "Sappho" of Toulouse, and reviver of the company of the Seven Troubadours under the title of the society of the Floral Games. A wreath of dusty *immortelles* tumbles over the nose of the poetess, whose actual existence, long problematical, appears now proved to the entire satisfaction of the burghers of Toulouse. An inscription, placed beneath her statue, testifies to the fact of her having not only benefited her native town by the institution of a society for the revival of the art of poetry and the encouragement of literature, but also constructed several public market-

places, which she bequeathed to the *capitouls** and inhabitants of the city, under the poetical and loving condition of scattering roses on her tomb. A custom long adhered to, as was that of placing the golden violet, the silver eglantine and marigold, and the pink—added for the encouragement of very young poets, on the high altar in the church of the Daurade, where this illustrious lady was buried. These were the original prizes destined for the successful competitors in the floral games; to which Louis the Fourteenth added the golden amaranthus, and an individual, whose name appears to have been forgotten, a silver lily, to be adjudged to the author of the best sonnet, or other work in honour of the Virgin.

In the hall of illustrious men,† the bust of Pibrac finds a place; but notwithstanding this species of local immortality, "les quatrains de Pibrac," like "les doctes sentences du Conseiller Matheiu," may thank the amber of Molière for

* The municipal magistrates were permitted to bear the title of Capitouls by Alphonse Count de Toulouse, who at the same time conferred many other and more important privileges on the citizens, in testimony of his gratitude for their vigorous defence of the town against the arms of Louis le Jeune.

† Toulousians.

their preservation. It was in the court of the Hôtel de Ville that the Duc de Montmorenci was executed, after the battle of Castelnaudari in 1632. History has written him down *traitor*—traitor to his king; but to his wife—the wife who for ever after sat alone in the chamber of mourning, taking that sad line for the motto of her heart,

"Rien ne m'est plus, plus ne m'est rien!"

and proudly refusing the visit of the man who would fain have insulted by his homage the widow of his victim:—what was he to her? O what a fond and faithful heart that must have been, to which another answered so fondly and so faithfully!

The concierge showed us the sword with which he was beheaded. It was not so mild (she said) as the guillotine. I asked her if that was often used here now; she said not, adding "now it only punishes the guilty, but it was not always so. I remember the day when I saw a good and virtuous lady as any in Toulouse, pass by with her hands tied behind her back going to execution, and all because she had sent a little money to her son, who was an emigrant." How such recollections darken the sky of France, be it ever so bright! I feel this continually.

Good resident society in the winter at Toulouse (they say), but at present the fashionables, demi-fashionables, and semi-demi, are all at their campagnes, seeing justice done in the vineyards. I could not discover the traditionary balcony from which La belle Paule looked down twice a-week on the admiring multitude, receiving the homage that man naturally pays to beauty. If there was a Messire Paule, count, baron, or chevalier, what a time he must have had of it, with a wife *en exposition*,—standing up to be gazed at! delirious, probably, two days in the week, and the other five flat as mulled port that had lain all night upon a pewter plate;* and no doubt callous to starers as the German giantess, poor Mrs. Gulley, whose seven feet two all eyes may measure at a shilling a-sight.

Good Mrs. Gulley, forgive the comparison; you who stand chastely *mother-Eve-ing* it amongst your serpents, but wiser than Eve—untempted, though surrounded by a legion of boa constrictors, may well be offended at it. It is not to display your charms to the coarse gaze of the rabble that you ascend your throne of scarlet serge, but honestly to verify the seven feet two inches set

* A well-known nursery nostrum.

forth upon the show-board; while your worthy mate, happier than Messire Paule, takes a shilling from each visitor. Honest gains! not due to any improper display of his wife's beauty, though you are a fine woman, Mrs. Gulley,—indeed, considered by some a Patagonian Venus,—but merely by sticking scrupulously to the seven feet two. He may well lay by for the winter day, who, like Mr. Gulley, has the proud feeling of doing so in all honour; conscious that, whatever respect may be inspired by your supernumerary inches, he has never yet condescended to hang you out as an object of allurement to the rabble.

But the goddess in the balcony, turning to the right and to the left! or suppose her even standing in still complacency, submitting her marvellous loveliness to the common gaze with as much modesty as so tarnishing a position admitted of, yet still what an abuse of the purity of womanhood! I have a portrait now in my memory of that lovely thing a household spirit, going about with a charm in its voice, its eye, its touch; a sympathy in its bright look that dove-tails with our human hopes, and joys, and sorrows so exquisitely, that it seems to be of one piece with them;

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that a family might live here in the best society, keep a carriage, give dinners, &c., for 300*l.* a-year. Perhaps she meant a French family; for strangers are seldom admitted to a full participation of native advantages, or a thorough knowledge of real prices.

The immediate setting round of Toulouse is flat, and we thought dull; but have been told of charming things where passers by do not go to look for them. All that volunteers itself is at present crisped up and discoloured from long continued heat and dryness: a spell of five months without a drop of rain is not freshening. We found some agreeable country pleasantly broken up about the Auch road, and some cheerful country houses; one that made a splendid appearance through the trees that partly screened it, and others of less pretension, but fresh and pretty in their gay garniture of leaves and flowers.

October 13th. Quitted Toulouse. A July day, after a vapoury morning; numerous country houses on each side of the road, and one of a very English appearance,—a fine house, with a sheltering wood, clumpy plantations, and the materials of a sweeping lawn, only choaked up by maize, and hedged into compartments. In the arrangement

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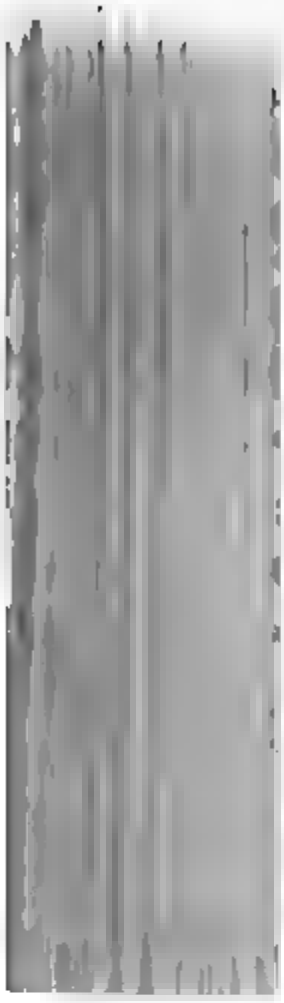
ciously; but then a canal often renders it unhealthy,—to say nothing of the immense loss of time wasted in the slow progress of inland navigation; while the rail-road almost realizes the fables of the wonderful lamp and the wishing-cap.

For the last two or three posts, the country has decidedly mended; the horizon widens, mountains close the distance, and the ground below the eye is broken up agreeably; all scorched, however, and the sun blazing hotly upon it. The beauty of a corn country consists in the fulness and freshness of the picture which it presents to the eye; but harvest over, the wide stretches of stubble that remain parching under a southern sun still in its vigour, recall no recollection of its budding green, or riper yellow. There are few trees here, and no grass; nothing but clods and stubble,—gratifying (no doubt) to agricultural eyes, and pleasant for the turkeys; but for those who love to see the young corn dressed in that sweet green of its own, always the very brightest in the livery of spring, or to watch the ripening grain and the red flowers, or the blue ones, that start up wilfully and lavishly among the bending stalks,—and moreover whose bills are not made for a choke of



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than meaner dwellings, for they have the air of being tenanted by poor occupants who cannot afford to keep them in repair, while the shabbier ones are of a piece with their inhabitants. Every village here is a street, into which any one of the country buildings—so little have they of real country character, might be transplanted without appearing out of place. Stone is every where in abundance, here as all over the south of France; the humblest habitation has usually its doors and windows faced round with it. In the Pyrenees every cottage has its complement of marble so employed,—and what is far better, almost every one its bower of foliage. With the peasant of the Pyrenees, shade is an article of luxury duly appreciated; but here it is no more thought of, than if the sun were nine months in the twelve below the horizon. And yet scarcely a day passes, even at this late season, that I do not at some hot hour in it envy Jonah the shade of his gourd.

CHAPTER XVI.

CARCASSONNE—THE LADY OF CARCASSONNE—THE GARDEN BOWER—BARBEIRAC—MOUX—COUNTRY TO NARBONNE—THE FAIR SEX—HIGH MASS—GIRAND RIQUIER AND THE TROUBADOURS—HONEY—BEZIERS—ITS SIEGE—NAPOLEON—THE STILL REMEMBERED—THE SCHOOLMASTER—DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE—NATIONAL EDUCATION.

CARCASSONNE.—Friday. "Ephraim feedeth on wind:" happy Ephraim! But for those who cannot accommodate their organs to such spare diet, what can be more tiresome than driving about with the encumbrance of an appetite from one hotel to another, and finding all occupied? Two hours ago, we should have answered—'nothing;' but now that we have supped, (though slenderly,) and are exceedingly sleepy, we all agree that the supreme bore is the being obliged to wait till the old general in the next room has done with the warming-pan.

As I am on the subject, I would fain say some-

thing of that old-fashioned utility, at present under the ban; but which, however unwholesome its vapour may now be deemed, is still the only test of damp sheets, or preservative against their evil effects, which travellers who are obliged to sleep in unchimneyed chambers can command. It is not long since I heard the demerits of this household comfort discussed in a tone of horror; but those who have sat by in silent hopelessness, as I have sometimes done, while the copper vessel of Etruscan shape, half full of warm water, has been gracefully passed backwards and forwards over the steaming sheets, know its value.

The chroniclers of Carcassonne pay homage to the widow of a Saracen chief, who defended the city boldly and successfully against the arms of Charlemagne, and who is honoured in their legends under the title of the Lady of Carcassonne. This town makes a melancholy page in the history of the Albigensian crusade, and a bright one in the wars of Aquitaine, when the burghers of Carcassonne defended their unwalled town valiantly against the army of the Black Prince. It is now remarkable for its manufactories of cloth, and

respectable for the general spirit of industry that prevails among its inhabitants.

Fine boulevards and handsome garden-houses skirt the town, and give it an air of importance, and a very agreeable appearance altogether. On an opposite eminence rises an irregular mass of dark stone, like a fortress with a town within its walls. This is, or rather was, the ancient city: of the more modern one we saw but little, and that little under the influence of hunger and impatience. A square planted with trees, and set round with arcades in the Italian way, with a fountain that seemed to us as we passed it rapidly to be worth more than a glance, was the only thing that attracted our attention in our hasty whisk from one hotel to another; which ineffectual whisking ended in our returning back again to the handsome boulevards, where we at last housed ourselves in an airy, comfortable hotel (St. Jean Baptiste) agreeably situated. From the top of the house is a view of the old town with its castle, and the newer one with its canal, &c., altogether arid and meagrely outlined, but we went up to see it, having nothing better to look at; indeed, we have not had

much to spoil us lately, and begin to forget the scales and measures of the Pyrenees, and to exclaim, how pretty! to every bush that has not a year's dust on it.

Sunday. Intended to have seen whatever was to be seen in the church way, but find myself nursing a cold; so if there is any thing curious or interesting at Carcassonne, it remains a sealed book to me. But opposite to my window are some large green trees that set me thinking; and a bower, or rather open summer-house, with an ancient lady and a group of quiet girls in it, that break up my reveries when my eye chances to light upon them. They look prim and reserved, as French girls often do in the presence of their elders, and one bends her head over a book, as if the secret of her heart were in it; the lower part of her face is in shadow, but the forehead is fair and even, and marked by two lines of dark hair evenly parted, and lower down by two delicately defined eyebrows. I wish she would look up; and yet perhaps if she were to do so, the castle which I am in the very act of building for her might be overthrown by the first glance. No: the castle keeps its ground, and the face which is now turned towards me, though not a

literally handsome one, has something tender and pensive in it that quickens fancy.

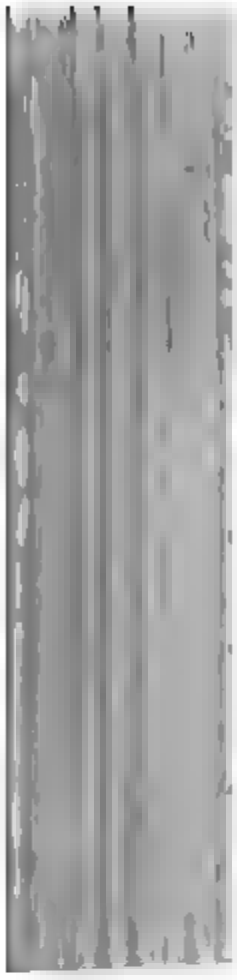
Stopped as we quitted the inn to look into a stable,—low arched, and deep as a cavern diving off into perspective. These cavern-like stables, coved and dim, are sometimes exceedingly picturesque; they are common in Languedoc, and form a supplement to the farm-house or country inn, sometimes as large again as itself.

Flemish planting towards Barbeirac; osier banks, and a river marked by a line of poplar, or darker trees, and some pleasant openings. Almonds every where, but out of bloom, and no better than the osiers. Here are olive trees, the first we have remarked, and on a par with the almonds for beauty; indeed, they might be mistaken for pollard willows, of which we have a superabundance. Willows, and poplars too, are like misfortunes, sure never to come single; where you see one, you may reckon on hundreds, and yet there is no moisture here to keep them up,—I mean the willows, for the sorrows are sure to find their own dew. At Moux, where we changed horses, not a drop of rain for ten months,—so said the post-master. What a treasure would that tree be, of which the historian of Philip

Quarll, the respectable supercargo Mr. Edward Dorrington, makes honourable mention. It grows in the middle of Fero Isle, and "being (as the grave narrator says) continually covered with clouds, its leaves drop always excellent water." A few slips of it here would be worth a ship-load of ingots.

Not a rill, pool, or even puddle from Carcassonne to Cruscade. The country always highly cultivated, though bone dry, (as the washerwomen say of their linen,) improves into agreeableness; we have a wide vale to the right, with glistening villages scattered over it, a soft distance, some tufts of green in the near landscape, and some dark lines of wood. Soon drops again into meagreness, naked rocks, starved vines, and stunted olives powdered with dust, and looking white and round as cauliflowers. A moist season (if such a thing ever occurs here) must give a different aspect to the country; but it has nothing about it that could be freshened into beauty, nothing good but the distant hills: the near ones are raw and stony.

A branch of the great canal traverses the old town of Narbonne, the birth-place of Marcus Aurelius, and the capital of the ancient Gaule Narbon-



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opponents. What Megaras for a popular tumult! An old one stood up in a cart into which she had forced herself, and seizing the reins, personified Bellona quite fearfully.

The men could have easily routed them had they wished it, for they were double their number; but they gave in with a sort of *place aux dames* air, going rapidly out of fashion in more distinguished circles, and which one does not expect to find taking refuge amongst the porters of Narbonne.

After breakfast, heard high mass at the cathedral; soft chaunting and the organ beautifully touched. The organ is a religious instrument: its sound is like the beauty of Milton's angel, severe yet heavenly. During the elevation of the Host, its tones seemed changed; a sweet yet reverential awe, a timid but sustained joy, spoke in its swelling harmonies; the office was performed with solemnity, and the congregation appeared not only attentive, but absorbed. A woman, who knelt near to the railing of the high altar, seemed profoundly touched; she pressed her prayer-book to her eyes, her forehead, her breast; clasped her hands, clenched them together, held them down at their

extreme length with her arms screwed into her sides; then raised her head slowly upwards, and the next moment hung it on her bosom, linking the fingers of both hands together and turning the palms outwards, with a sort of giving up to grief, an intenseness of feeling which, had her countenance been capable of expressing the sentiment that filled her mind, would have aptly imaged the sorrow of the women who came at dawn of day to the sepulchre, and "found not the body of the Lord." The desolation was there, and its grandeur; but the face was that of a mere *poissarde*, in the positive opprobrium of the word.

The choir was full to overflowing; so we sat down on a stone bench in the nave, and had no sooner placed ourselves, than we were perceived by two ladies, who immediately sent a woman to us with chairs; and at the same moment an old man brought me one from which he had just risen, and before I could either refuse or thank him for it, was down on his knees in a corner praying on the pavement. The woman too disappeared without even a '*merci*,' for her disinterested civility. How greatly do these small courtesies dispose the mind to receive a favourable impression, not only

of the individual who offers them, but of the national character; and how far beyond its apparent sphere may the influence of a look or a word extend! Mass lasted so long, and the supplementary procession threatened to last so much longer, that we were obliged to steal away without seeing the interior of the choir, which is enclosed within a heavy screen that greatly impedes the architectural effect of the edifice.

Narbonne, maugre its pagan origin (being granddaughter, after a manner, to Hercules,)* and its ancient and friendly connexions with the Saracens, is a very Christian city, and one of the earliest converted from heathenism; for, according to the chronicle, Sergius Paulus the deputy, seeing how Elymas the sorcerer was punished, believed; and coming to Languedoc, preached Christianity to its people. So did later proselyters; but with sword and brand, not words. The ferocious Foulques, and the politic Peter of Benevento, have both left recollections of their active piety; and in nearer times, Richelieu embalmed it with his own peculiar spices of sanctity. Girand Riquier, almost the last of the troubadours, was of this

* Whose son Narbon was its founder: so says the legend.

place; but the profession had fallen from its high repute, and the Arabian colouring of the Provençal poetry been effaced by grosser hues long before its extinction.

The sudden bursting out of the springs of poetry in a dry land, is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of this divine art; and the poetical colouring which the South of France receives from the loves and the lays of the troubadours, is even now not amongst the least of its attractions. Yet, in the prose translations which Millot has given us of troubadour rhymes, and the specimens with which we have become acquainted through other mediums, we find little proof of poetical genius, and in its stead an artificial character which always argues and creates coldness. Sometimes there is bluster, sometimes gracefulness, but in general a total absence of the passion of poetry, a meagreness of imagery, a fondness for conceits, and nothing of the rude energy which we occasionally find in the dawning of an art, compensating the absence of higher-toned faculties. A fatiguing monotony prevails through all the love verses of that "populace de troubadours," each of whom celebrates, in nearly similar strains,

'la bouche fraiche et riante,' 'le joli parler,' the grace and *gentillesse* of the lady of his love,—'bel espoir,' 'bel déport,' 'bel cavalier,' 'miels de donna,' and so on, to whom, rejecting the more familiar names of Jordana, Beatrice, &c., those elaborate rhymers loved to give the fantastic ones which a passing word, a casual movement, had suggested to their fancy.

They talk here of marshy environs full of fever and ague, but to the eye they are not disagreeable. Live hedges, chiefly of tamarisk, some trees, and foliage still green, but a melancholy preponderance of willows. I have left Narbonne without speaking of the honey, which is too strongly aromatic for my taste; its boasted compound flavour is less pure, and (I thought) less agreeable to the palate than the unmedicated sweets of our own hives. It is literally apothecary's honey; highly valuable as a drug, but very much overpraised as a luxury.

I once tasted Hybla, that true *extrait des milles fleurs*, and thought the same of it. To taste the flowers of Hybla in any way was something worth, but the fancy banqueted more than the palate.

This country of honey is remarkable for its aromatic herbage, and from that circumstance, as well

as from skilful management, and the custom of often removing the hives to fresh pastures, comes its potent flavour and its medicinal qualities. What a fairy tale has that immortal Anne Radcliffe made of this same Languedoc! and the odd thing is, that we continue to love her fancy pictures, and almost to believe in them even while we have the dusty reality before our very eyes. The consecutive sweetness and gentle colouring of tame scenery in certain climates, often repose the mind agreeably; but what we have seen of this country of romantic memories is not only tame, but dry. The dusty south of Languedoc, and the soft green south of the Pyrenees, are two very different things; nothing there is bleached, or hard, or arid. I have seen landscapes in the low lands without one eminent feature, where nothing was any thing in itself, but in which, after sunset, when the sky was a pale, illumined, equal amber, the earth a humid green,—when the trees cast no shadow and the air was silent, there was a character of quiet beauty made up of colouring, warmth, and stillness, on which thought grew while it reposed, as a child does while it sleeps on its soft pillow.

Mounted up into a dreary sea-coast looking

country, but no sea; nothing but vines and a crumbling soil, that gave us bushels of dust at every step. Then came a wide vale, a shining town, dark hills, and their shadows; and then a little peep of the sea, but where I cannot exactly remember. Virgil, they say, was sometimes out in his geography,—how comforting! and our dear Shakspeare gave a sea coast to Bohemia;* but my sea was only a streak between two hills, like the tin line that finishes an opera ocean, so I made no note of it.

Béziers sits high, with a bold church on its summit, a gentle river at its feet charmingly fringed, and a fine walk massively shaded lying along its brink. The church has an excellent tint of rust upon it, that reposes the eye from the glare of the white houses, and falls in beautifully with the blue sky; and the terrace a fine view of the rich valley, through which the Orbe winds gracefully. The position of the town is noble and domineering; I thought, as I looked up at it, of the terrible Simon de Montfort, the general executioner, whom the monkish historians called the Machabeus of the age; and of that tremendous siege, when

* Winter's Tale.

the Albigenses were put to the sword and massacred without a touch of mercy. Not a living soul escaped! and one, who wore priest's robes,* cried out to those who asked how they should distinguish the heretics from the Catholics that were within the town,—"Tuez les tous: le Seigneur reconnaîtra les siens."

All were massacred! This vast and general desolation is scarcely comprehended by the mind; it stands afar off, almost too infinite for sympathy. The wind rises in the desert, and heaving up the sand as it rushes onwards, buries the whole caravan beneath its weight:—we hear of the general inhumation, shudder, and forget it. But should we be told that a woman had escaped, and that having no other living being near to her but the infant at her bosom, had watched it as it lay dying of hunger,—she, the mother who had borne it, but who sat alone with it in the desert, then should we feel our sympathies instantly and keenly awakened. When the Hebrew children were massacred by order of Herod, there was great lamentation in Ramah, every house had its dead; but it is with Rachel—that lone woman weeping for her

* Arnold Amarie, Abbot of Citeaux, the Pope's legate.

children, and who would not be comforted because they were not, that our hearts bear company.

And yet those canons in their choral robes, who gathered round the high altar in the old cathedral, tolling the bells as if they would pray by louder voices than their own to those who came to slaughter them,—and those bells that never ceased till all was silent, have something in them that shakes the soul like an individual horror.

The country about Béziers is one of the richest tracts in France. It is a wine country, and the inhabitants are wealthy proprietors, who live in handsome houses faced with white stone, and balconied like the fine mansions of a capital. Vintage in full vigour, (every where else it seems over,) and the grapes, which we bought for almost nothing, absolute ambrosia.

Napoleon seems still chief idol here; we quitted the town by the Porte Napoléon,—name in gilt letters over the gate, 'Café Napoléon' and 'Napoléon' on a sign-board, just by. Posthumous honours are often an interested homage to the successor: here they are offered to a tree dead down to its very roots, the only scion withered on its young

stalk, all passed away but the life that lives in deeds, or in the fainter register of memory.

Improvements do not run upon wheels here, but come tugging on at a heavy footpace, stopping to take breath at every three steps. There are ploughs that look as if they came down from Charlemagne, or his father Pepin, and so do some other things. The provincial French are (it is said) still disposed to resist new systems; and old prejudices,—religious, political, or of habit, in many places keep out *the schoolmaster*. A friend of mine asked a French lady of rank some questions relative to the state of morals in her part of the country; to which she replied most favourably, giving her tenantry the credit of being the best people in the whole department,—pious, virtuous, honest, neighbourly; and winding all up with "Ah, monsieur, ils ne savent pas lire."

Touching the schoolmaster: violent changes are always violently opposed, even gradual ones are watched suspiciously, and seldom pass in wholly unobserved, even through the narrow postern; while at the great gate there are watchers who see them even in the dark, and straightway blow

the horn, though often too late to prevent their entry. In politics, in morals, as in manners, we get used to old abuses, as we do to old maladies of long standing; but new laws, new systems, and new diseases frighten us. We know the extent of the standing evil, but not the whole resources of the remedy; and remembering that all changes bring difficulties with them, are apt to forget how often those very difficulties wear down into permanent advantages.

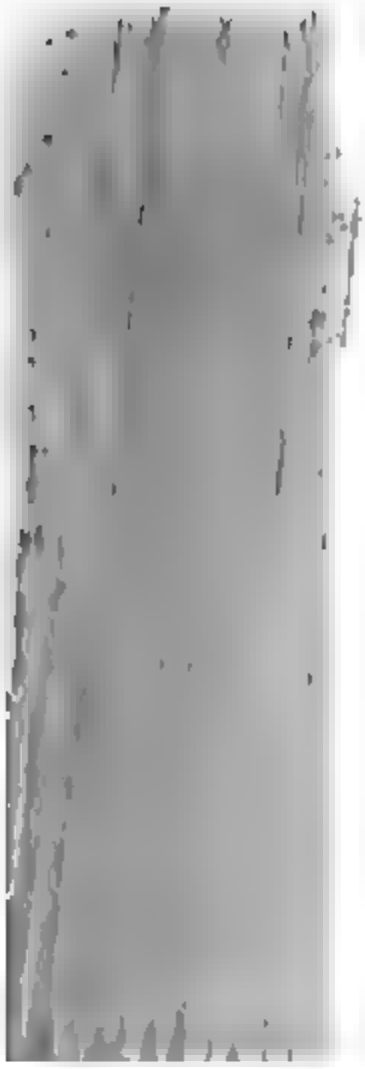
In no country perhaps in the world, is there more rural beauty of the simple and endearing kind than in our own, nor does any other promise sweeter pictures of household loveliness; but the poetry of ignorance, such as it still exists in the neighbourhood of Madame de B——, has passed away from our cottages, and the prose of dissipated poverty has, I fear in many instances, come in its stead. The march of the schoolmaster will be indeed a blessing, if by strengthening the moral feeling, opening new sources of happiness, inspiring a desire of knowledge, awakening a disgust of vice, it may counteract the attractions of the ale-house, or mitigate the horrors of the factory.

This is an entirely practical age: we no longer

apply the doctrines of speculative philosophy to the state of society and morals, but coldly silence illusions with one broad question, "Of what use are they?" Doubts are now become doctrines, the vague changes to the palpable: Enthusiasm gathers up her robe for flight, and Poetry, who cannot live without her, sails off to bear her company. The movement of mind, propelled by the general diffusion of useful knowledge, will in time become mechanically rapid, like the movement of a steam engine: we shall discard the poetical swathings of life, break up the painted case which conceals the real object from our eyes, and come straight at the core, as an antiquarian does at the fibres of his mummy. Talent will in all classes find its means of developement, its sphere of action: there will be less ignorance, but more mediocrity, opener means and fairer play: the higher cast of mind will always and in all situations rise, like water, to a level with its source; but those whose faculties are merely imitative, no longer sustained by the feeling of superiority which instruction derives from the presence of ignorance, overtaken by those whom they had before despised but whom education has raised to their standard, outrun by supe-

rior intelligence,—now for the first time finding tongue, will cease to usurp the high seat, and must be content to share the common bench with others. For the glory of the new system is its principle of justice; it lays the road to honourable distinction open to all mankind, and by affording the means of improvement, facilitates,—or rather bestows, the power of action. The privileged will no longer plunge alone into the waters of knowledge, and then shutting up the flood-gates, turn that into a pool which ought to be a common stream; but mingling with those who have hitherto been barred out from a community of benefit, make general cause with them for the wise and noble purpose of general advancement.

Whether the benefits of instruction equally diffused, through the medium of a judicious and enlightened system of national education, be or be not likely to conduce to the happiness of mankind, remains a doubt with many, and if mankind were still in the poet's age of golden ignorance, it might be one with more; though the principle of equity is so strongly and undeniably in its favour, that the opposition of wise and virtuous men to those whose enlightened views would turn the restlessness



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few are rendered unhappy by having received an education which has served to open their eyes to the disadvantages of their social position, without perhaps enduing them with sufficient strength to combat those disadvantages, or sufficient philosophy to rise above them. There may be others, too, whose feelings have from the same cause been refined into a sensitiveness that, when awakened, becomes the source of continual anguish and deep-rooted misanthropy; to such, ignorance may be happiness, though to others the source of eternal regret. But in all great questions, the principle of common justice and general good should be the governing one; and the aid which man in an influential position owes to his fellow men who are in a dependant one, and which so mainly tends to the developement of moral and mental character, should not be considered as less incumbent, because it may be sometimes unavailable.

CHAPTER XVII.

LA BEGUDE — PEZENAS — MOLIERE — MEZE — THE BEST THING THERE — MONTPELLIER — MUSEE FABRE — CLIMATE, ETC. — AQUEDUCTS — LA PEYROU — AN EXTENSIVE VIEW — THE BISHOP'S VILLA — DEBIT DE VACHE — HOTEL DU MIDI — THE AIR OF MONTPELLIER.

ENVIED the post-master of La Begude his fountain, his shade, and his garden with its beautiful hedge of roses. Changed horses at Pezenas, where Molière, then the director of a strolling company, is said to have composed some of his earliest dramatic pieces.

In those days, the barber's shop served the purpose of the more modern coffee-house, and the chair in which this great man sat habitually, when he indulged his gossiping vein (what a delightful one it must have been!) at the favoured Figaro's of the day, is still preserved here, and honoured as Ariosto's is at Ferrara. The possessor of this precious relic, a gentleman of the town, allows it to be seen and sat in by the curious; at least so

we are told. Good houses, and of course walks: every town in France has its public walk; when I say *every*, I do not mean that *almost* should be *sous entendu*, for I cannot at this moment recollect any that does not possess this embellishment, except Montmorency; which, having the forest at its door, would probably disdain the double rows of limes or sycamore, the boulevard promenade which in other places is gratefully accepted as a succedaneum.

But it does not follow that because there are trees there should be shade also: here that luxury must be hunted for in some dark corner; for though the leaves are not yet fallen, they are so crisped, that the sunbeams come down through them boldly, lighting up the ground all round: Herne's oak, were it here, would cast no better shadow than Peter Schlemil. What a fine thing it is to be able to wrangle with the sun on the sixteenth of October! At Mèze, a very pretty woman benevolently placed herself on a bench opposite to our carriage, and while we waited for horses, suffered us to admire a countenance full of charm, with a certain finesse of expression at once gay, well bred, and perfectly innocent,—what the French call a *jolie figure de fantaisie;* it was a

pleasure to find it there, rose-budding among so many wall-flower visages.

The next pleasant thing that we met with was the sea, or rather a branch of it,—the port of Mèze, I believe, but it did not fill my mind: I wanted the wide expanse, the indented shore, the distant sail, the blue line of the horizon, and the land of imagination beyond it. The bay is solitary,—so far, so good; and has one or two fishing-villages (or it may be towns) within it,—houses, churches, and all, clinging together like a cluster of filberts; very brown and desolate, yet picturesque, like a nest of sea-side hovels in Italy. Calcined rocks, and the earth sometimes of a bright red, emulating the vigorous tinting of a young lady's first effort in the landscape line.

Wide levels occasionally varied by gentle swells; vines dove-tailed with grain; almonds and quinces making hedges, and with no better effect at this season than osiers and crab-apples. There is no individualizing such scenery; the country houses have shade about them, and look pretty; but nothing throws itself into picture.

We are now at Montpellier, where we arrived an hour after dark: had we turned off to see the nine

falls of the great canal, as we had some idea of doing, we should not have got here till midnight. Found all sorts of comforts at the Hôtel du Midi; and dinner (an excellent one) ready in ten minutes.

I should think that Montpellier, from what I have seen of it this morning, must have more dust in it than any town in Europe. When the air is still, it lies in beds on the pavement; if there is a light wind, it springs up and envelopes every thing. The houses are white, the trees are white; the ground dazzles as if it were covered with snow, and if a dog runs by, a white cloud is sure to run after it. And then the glare! a town built of fine white stone sounds grandly, but the glare of Montpellier makes one regret bricks as if they were verdure. It is not here that one can, like the 'petit Lapin' of La Fontaine,

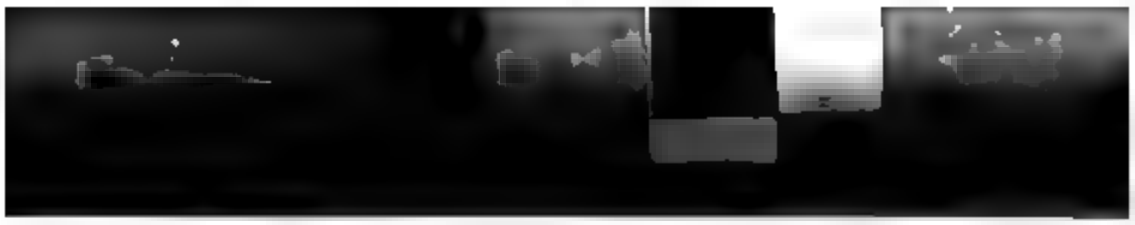
> "Faire à l'Aurore sa cour,
> Parmi le thym, et la rosée:"

every thing dies of thirst; four whole months without a drop of rain. Other skies may bring other aspects, and by and by there may be moisture even here—perhaps mud; who knows?

Some reparations at the Musée Fabre, so we did not see it. The pictures are a donation from the

gentleman whose name it bears; he was himself an artist, and is presumed to have succeeded Alfieri in the good graces of the Countess d'Albany, who, some say, married him; at all events she manifested her attachment by the bequest of her pictures, &c. The collection has a high name; whether a merited one, I cannot say. A picture gallery is often the most fatiguing and least profitable of all exhibitions, and as often the most delightful; sometimes torturing the nerves, sometimes soothing them with those deeply-felt images of beauty, those exquisite illusions in which the eye sees motion, while the ear listens for sound. Who has not found the silence of noon in the landscapes of Claude? or heard the pipe of the shepherd in the valleys of Poussin? Have we not all talked with pictures? felt, sorrowed, rejoiced, —and more—remembered with them?

A few drops of rain this morning, just enough to mark the dust, but not to sink into it; and now the sun is shining out again. The mornings and evenings are, however, often cold enough to make a fire pleasant. It is true, we are at the north side of the street; if we were at the south, we should broil. Every thing in this climate of sharp wind

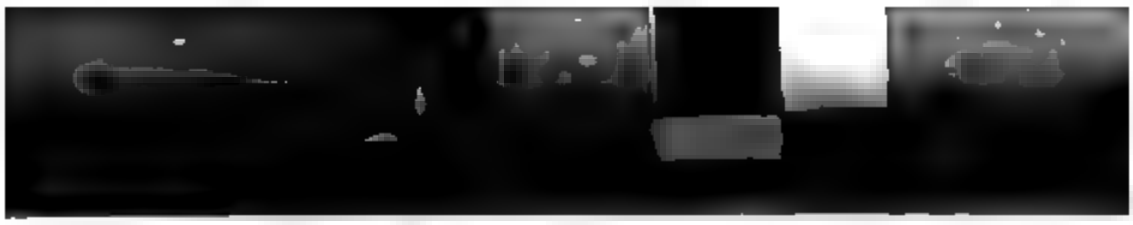


and blazing sun, depends on the aspect in which one happens to be placed,—in winter, a sunny chamber may have a green-house atmosphere; but, crossing streets and turning corners must be trying work to invalids. Fuel is brought to Montpellier from a considerable distance, and is proportionably dear; all other things, both of luxury or necessity, exceedingly cheap,—(authority, our host). The famous Roquefort—the only really good French cheese, is made at a place a few leagues off: it resembles our Stilton, and though inferior to it, is often excellent. Very good strawberries at breakfast: all rare and delicate things are to be found here, but where the abundance comes from one is at a loss to find out, for every foot of land seems given up to the vine and the olive. It is a highly cultivated and fruitful country, but it must be a practised eye that can discover the riches of the soil through the coat of dust that hardens on it, and spreads its chalky uniform tone over the whole country.

Made a round of sights, beginning with the Peyrou, a very fine '*Place*,' terminated by a temple, and planted at each side with several rows of trees. The whole has a gorgeous Versailles

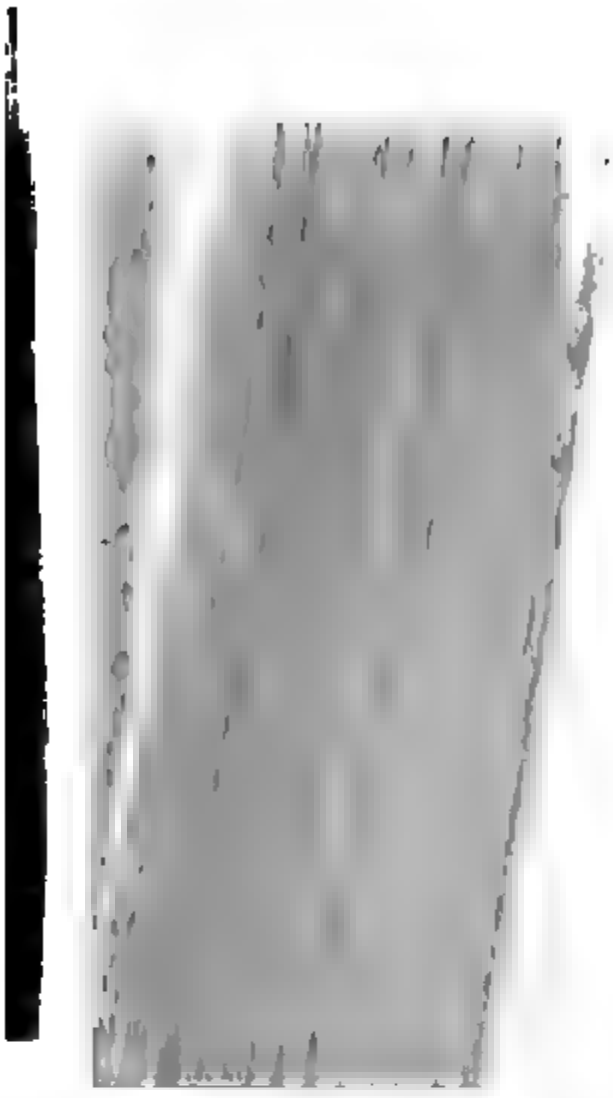
effect, and commands a magnificent view. In front of the entrance is one of the town gates; it is handsome, and quite in keeping with the Peyrou, which belongs altogether to the time and taste of Louis the Fourteenth. Behind the building is a modern aqueduct, stretching over a surface agreeably varied, and giving something of a Roman air to a scene in itself beautifully southern. By means of this aqueduct, the town is abundantly provided with water; the temple receives part of its wealth within its reservoir, another reservoir at its base is also amply supplied: there are jets d'eau too, but less lavishly fed, and other depôts under the aquatic temple, from which various quarters of the town are furnished with this household blessing. Visited the underground naïads, and then returned to look again at the aqueduct.

There is something in the form of an aqueduct that, independent of its utility, pleases one greatly. I love its aërial yet massive stretch, its solid lightness, its open arches rising one above another that let in the sky and the distance,—sometimes rough bits of admirable tinting, that become picture by the help of the arched framing, or quiet garden scenes that bud and bloom, wither and revive,



beside its time-defying strength. Every thing looks well through an arch; it is one of the inventions of architecture most generally pleasing to the eye, and one feels surprised, when admiring its graceful boldness, that Greek taste did not discover, or having discovered, did not employ, so useful and so beautiful a form. The recollections, too, that are awakened by the sight of an aqueduct are so full of thought; looking on it, we remember the great works of the Romans, the broken arches of the Campagna, the solitary fragments of the marshes of Miturnus, and those rich remains garlanded with the wild vegetation that loves to luxuriate amidst ruins, making decay seem beautiful, and whose fine moral lesson meets the eye in every chapter of old Italy. This aqueduct is a pleasing object, but more a hint to memory than a call on admiration.

A magnificent panoramic view from La Peyrou. The blue Mediterranean is there, the bay of Cette, the mountains of the Cevennes, and those of Roussillon and the high Pyrenees. I cannot boast of having seen my dear old friends,—there were too many clouds between us; but when the atmosphere is clear, so are they, and beautifully visible.



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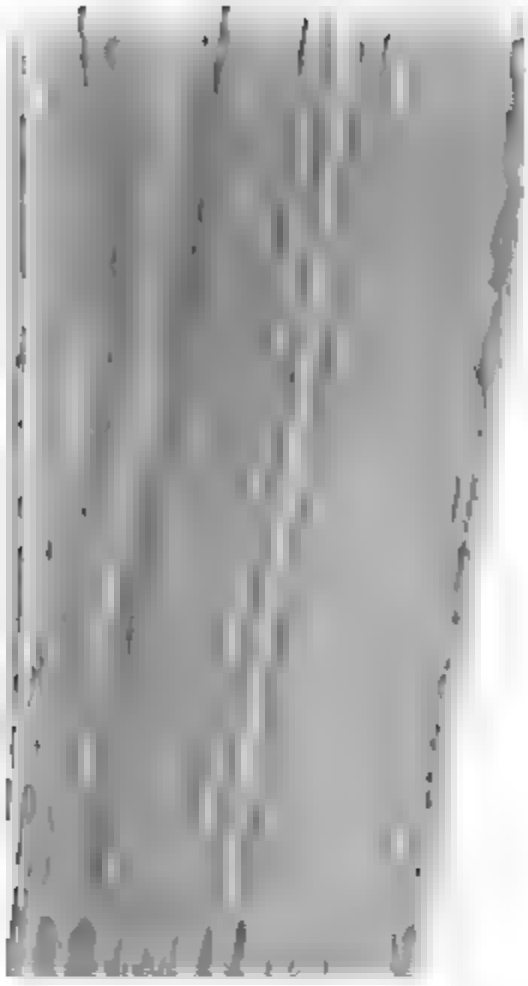
The guardian of the waters, who acted as our cicerone, assured us gravely that three parts of the world were to be seen from the Peyrou,—'the Alps,' and he pointed to the sky, 'the Pyrenees, and the sea.' Having thus divided the globe, he condescended to details,—"There, (said he,) behind that mountain, which is called Le Pied de Salut, lies Paris."

"Where?" I exclaimed.

"Why, just behind the hill," he replied impa-

the elevated terrace behind the water-temple. I shall never forget the beauty of the setting sun, or the amber sky that remained, in spite of the gathering twilight, for one whole hour behind it. The earth, too, was in its hour of loveliness; the pleasant country passing from light to shadow, a faint shine lingering longest on the distant line of sea, and the fair gardens spread out below, with their broad courtly walks fringed with flower-knots or dark trees, with groupes taking ices or the sweet nectars of the south under their shade. Gay ladies were there in rainbow garments, listening to their earnest cavaliers, or sympathizing with their silent ones; pretty children bo-peeping in the alleys, and the sweet lights making Boccaccio groupes of what might in broad sunshine have seemed of more every-day fashion. I have seldom seen any thing so charming. At this same season the pomegranate hedges, being in bloom, are exceedingly beautiful, and very pleasant country places may be found in the neighbourhood of Montpellier.



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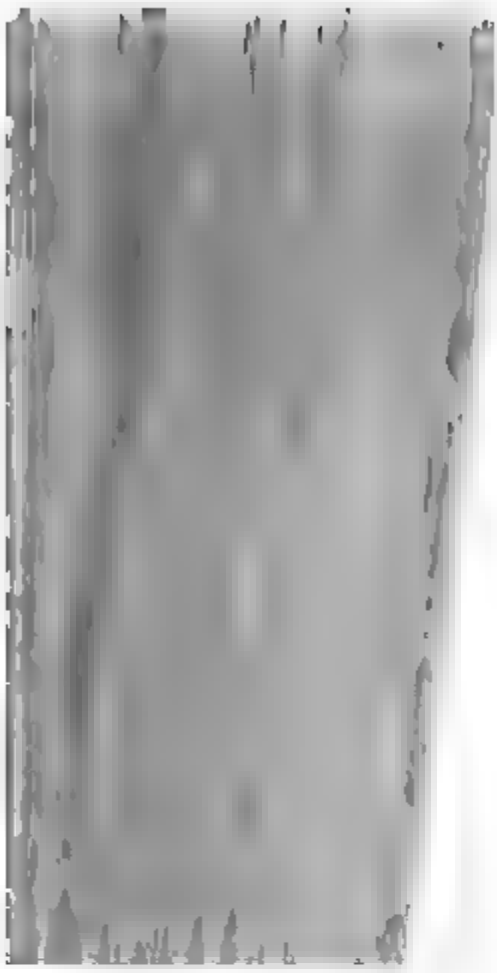
foundation of that celebrity which still attends both the schools and professors of this learned city. Drove to the botanical garden, where the grave of poor Narcissa—or at least the spot which passes for it, is still shown. I had it all before me,—the melancholy night-scene, the earth opened in the dead hour, the young corpse let down into it stealthily, and the muffled mourner stifling the father's sorrow in the ministry of the priest. But we could find no one to point it out; so we returned to the carriage, and giving ourselves up to our coachman's guidance, were soon landed at the country residence of the bishop. Sphinxes at the gate, and the seasons, hacked in stone and painted a blue white, in the garden; besides various other decorations,—as box hedges, round trees skilfully tonsured, screw trees artfully twisted, starved oranges in vases of green and yellow pottery, and a *parc*—as they called it, into which the gardener would fain have lured us; there were alleys (he said) and a basin, but we resisted the temptation. Such things, though pleasant in their summer liveries, do not become the yellow leaf;—the sear carpeting and oozing litter of autumn scandalize trim walks: very well for the forest, which has no gardener but the wind, or for odd bodies like my-



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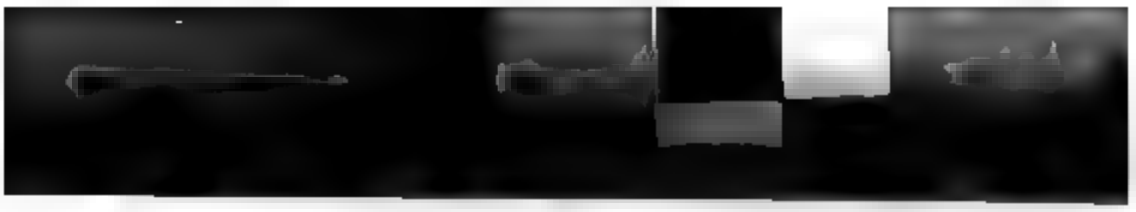


form of a snug fire, an *appétissant* dish, oyster sauce, and family faces.

Impossible to quit Montpellier without saying something of the Hôtel du Midi, which is perfect in comfort, cleanliness, and all that constitutes an excellent inn. The proprietor has been a courier. I have remarked in Italy, that whenever an hotel is particularly good, the master is invariably a *ci-devant* courier; usually an active intelligent person, accustomed to cater for a variety of fancies, conversant with the customs, comforts, and advantages of many countries, and seldom forgetting to provide his house with whatever used to please Milor, or keep Miladi in good humour.

The air of Montpellier is no longer in vogue; it is discovered to be too sharp and variable for chest complaints, and must, if all now said of it be true, have killed its thousands. Formerly all consumptive cases were despatched to Montpellier; every hot garden walk was called Montpellier; every sunny suburb had its Montpellier-row, and Montpellier itself was converted into an English colony. But now all those who do not go on to Nice or Pisa, stop at Hyeres, where the mistral (they say) is never felt.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LUNEL—NISMES—THE AMPHITHEATRE—A LOOK TOWARDS BEAUCAIRE—MAISON CARREE—ITS VICISSITUDES—FOUNTAIN AND BATHS—TEMPLE OF DIANA—EFFECT OF RUINS ON THE MIND—LA TOUR MAGNE—NISMES, ITS GENERAL EFFECT—ANTIQUITIES—INEFFICIENCY OF WORDS—PRODUCE, INNS, ETC., OF THE SOUTH—PONT DU GARD—ITS POSITION.

The country from Montpellier to Nismes is sometimes of a more agreeable character than the general run of that to which we have been lately accustomed. The houses have plantations about them, and occasionally sizeable trees, with now and then a superb fir, clothed in the spreading beauty of the cedar. Not a waste inch—all vines and olives, and the latter laden with fruit; fig-trees scrambling in the hedges, but not very fine ones: nothing of the breadth and richness which they attain at Genoa, and in other parts of Italy. A close population; towns and villages bleaching to the right and to the left; at Colombier, Lunel and Tokay

were pressed upon us, but when we arrived at Lunel itself, we seemed to enter into the very domain of Bacchus,—the sound of cooperage, the sight of casks filling the streets, and the strong vinous odour—every thing, in short, announced the neighbourhood of the 'muscat adorable.' A woman rushed out upon us with a sample bottle; but we resisted, contenting ourselves with grapes, which we found solid and fleshy, like the jar grapes that we get from Portugal.

Lunel was (according to tradition) colonized in the tenth century by Jews; learned men, who taught publicly in the synagogue. The son of Semele seems to be now high priest, and the golden bell and the pomegranate, the twined linen and cunning work of the ephod, have made way for the thyrsis and the vine-wreath.

There are no fences here, nothing to prevent the hungry vagrant from participating in nature's bounty; both grapes and olives may be gathered by any one who passes. This confidence indicates a respect for property highly creditable to national character; in many (indeed most) parts of France, orchards, vineyards, and kitchen-gardens are unfenced, and yet it is rare to hear of their being pilfered.

Magnificent mules, and tricked out with ta
of red and blue like a lady's hawking palfrey;
finer—that is showier, than the women, who
gipsy hats of black beaver, and when young,
in them like Bunbury's country girls.

Asked a man to day how the people were
posed towards the new dynasty. "Some well,
ill," he said; and added, that for himself he l
what revolutions were; he had seen more than
and could say, that though the first tug was
work, those who came afterwards were gai
According to his idea, the first stirrers of
lutionary action are like the angel who came t
pool of Bethesda and troubled its waters; bu
next who went down found healing. Whe
the medicine be in the mud or in the mix
must be worked up until the healthy parti
detached from the dross, rise to the surface
diffuse their benefits.

We entered Nismes by an igooble suburb,
came at once upon the amphitheatre. I wa
much surprised as if I had never heard of it,
infinitely more pleased than I should have l
had I approached it through an avenue of c
monies. It is a grand and beautiful relic, sob

and richly coloured; but the inevitable repairs, though done after the old pattern, are sometimes a drawback on the unity of effect. The interior has a look of fresh rubbish about it, of recent reparation, a vexatious air of completeness: when such things are mutilated by the hand of time, we wish them perfect, that an image of the past might be presented, as it were livingly, to our minds; but we desire to see their antique forms preserved—not restored. And when new bricks, fresh mortar, and stone just hewn, speak to us in a modern tongue, we wish again for the old rents and gaps that tally with the past,—the stains and notches of ages, leisurely impressed and bearing record.

The repairs are neither gilt or lettered; we find no pope's name, or king's, with a *munificentia* at the end of it; they are as inoffensive as such things can be, and were (it is said) indispensable to the preservation of the building. But still there is pieceing;—"the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

We ascended to the highest range of seats, and looked down into the crater of the circus. A goat hung among some high fragments, stretching out

its neck to crop the leaves of a fig-tree that grew out through a fissure in the wall above. It should have been the only tenant of the spot, but it had others not so much in character with its antique and decaying beauty; troopers and matrosses figured in the arena, now appropriated to military purposes, and encumbered by field-pieces and artillery waggons. A few years ago, huts and even houses occupied its space, and three thousand persons found an asylum within the old walls; but the colony was routed, and bull fights—greatly frequented (our guide tells us) by the ladies of Nismes, restored it as nearly to its ancient and ferocious uses as modern manners admitted of.*

From our post at the top of the arena, we overlooked the country towards Beaucaire and the mountains of Arles,—Beaucaire famous for its annual fair, and Arles where the Romans reigned by consuls, and the Goths by kings. It had kings of its own afterwards,—Counts of Provence, who

* At a later visit to Nismes, we found part of the arena screened in with tattered tapestry, benches and old chairs arranged in rows, and every thing prepared for the representation of "La Mort de La Tour d'Auvergne, premier Grenadier de la France," to be enacted by a company of strollers.

made themselves so; and was the cradle of the langue d'Oc, or Romane Provençale, under King Bozon in the ninth century. It is further and still more worthily honoured by being one of the first towns in France converted to Christianity, and is remarkable as affording an apparently inexhaustible field of interest to the antiquarian. Many of its unearthed treasures decorate the royal museums, and various remains of its Roman times still exist in the town, which is by some believed to possess the dust of the illustrious Roland, conveyed there, by order of Charlemagne, after the battle of Roncevaux. The beauty of the women of Arles is celebrated throughout the country; but the dead and the living are null to us, for there stands the cholera, like the angel of the flaming sword, blocking up all entrance.

Behind our reconnoitring post, rises a wooded hill crowned by a tower,—La Tour Magne, of antique and somewhat barbarous aspect. It is a Roman relic, and supposed to have been anciently a light-house; but its shapeless and ragged mass does not help conjecture.

The antients were fortunate, not only in the beauty and splendour of their conceptions, but

also in the durability of their materials, their everlasting granites, marbles, and porphyries: the most solid works of modern art seem but theatrical decorations compared with the modelled quarries of antiquity. I know of nothing so beautiful as the Maison Carrée, nor—though now discovered to be only a fragment of some building of mightier dimensions—temple, forum, or basilica,—any which presents (at least to the unlearned eye) a more exquisite and perfect whole. Its completeness seems one of its most striking characteristics, and left me but one wish; and that was to remove the wall in which the columns are imbedded, it seems so like something modern built up to preserve the structure. It is not so; but even with its excuse of antiquity, still it repulses the imagination, which delights in the classical dignity and withdrawing lines of the open colonnade. But what grace, beauty, and harmony of proportion,—what decorative richness and delicacy! Here one need not study, one need only feel: a child could scarcely look at it without delight. Louis the Fourteenth would fain have transported it stone by stone from its own Roman Nismes to the park at Versailles, where in the midst of clipped trees, manufactured

water, and modern gorgeousness, it would have either sunk into a court theatre, or standing aloof from its humiliated companions, have reduced their big-wig dignity to the dimensions of a plain bob. Luckily the thing was not feasible, so the temples and rotundas of the marble garden still keep their cold pre-eminence.

In the various vicissitudes of the Maison Carrée, from its first and long uncertain destination * through the different phases of church, town-hall, stable, granary, &c., it has suffered more from the barbarism of man, than even from the corrodings of time. It is now a museum, in which are contained various small bronzes and other antiquities discovered in the vicinity of Nismes, and a large filling up of modern efforts. I should rather have seen it unmodernised, without the gilt letters over the door, or the great brown door itself,—a spec-

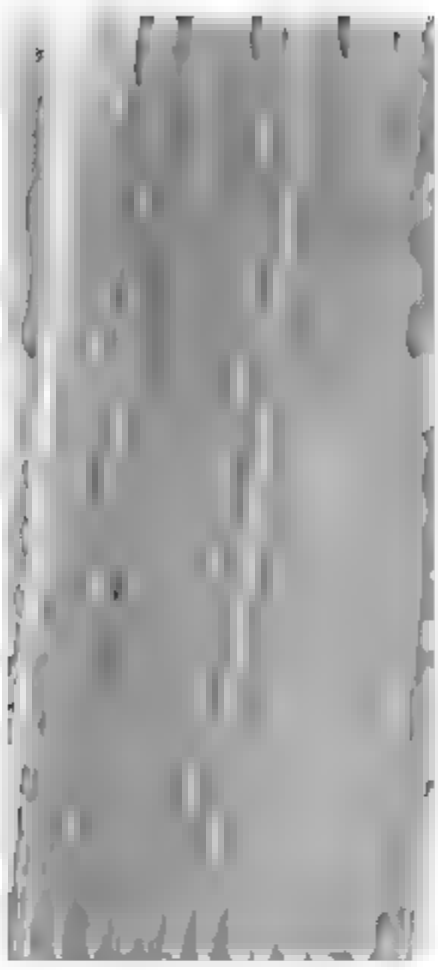
* It is, however, generally believed, upon the authority of an inscription explained by Monsieur de Séguier, from a careful examination of certain holes visible in the architrave, and which had evidently been made by the cramps by which bronze letters (some traces of which still remain) had been fixed in the walls, to have been a temple erected in honour of Caius and Lucius Cæsar, grandsons of Augustus.

tator of the present, yet too entirely belonging to the past to be an actor in it. However, when we think that horses have been stabled here, forage stacked up, and the bustle of a town-hall outraged its chaste silence,—that, in short, it seems fated to be utilized, its present may be of its various appropriations the most consistent; nor could a better perhaps have been suggested, unless indeed it had been preserved for the higher purpose of prayer, for which its character of elevated simplicity seems to have designed it.

The celebrated fountain, its basins and baths, partly antique and partly restored after the ancient plan of the Roman baths which occupied the same site, are enclosed within a garden, beautiful from its shade and freshness, which reposes in the hollo of a hill planted with evergreens to its summit, and forming a permanent decoration of the most pleasing kind in a country, where the foliage of summer must soon become parched and yellow. The source of this fountain is in a rock at the foot of the hill, and its abundant and beautifully clear waters, after having filled two large reservoirs, are conveyed through a handsome canal, planted at each side with trees, into various parts of the city.

In the principal bath, the Roman pavement still remains; and very near to a limpid basin with a living floor of emerald weeds, but not (as they say) on its brink, are the remains of a temple supposed to have been dedicated to the worship of Diana; but whether in her most accredited character, or in that of Hecate or Luna, antiquarians have not yet decided.

I must confess that it is a little too far gone for me; but I thought the wild vegetation that prospers amidst the ruins beautiful, and am afraid was as much pleased with the fig-trees as with the temple, though it was from its helping tints and strong relief that they perhaps derived their charm. After all, considering the good intentions of Charles Martel, and the previous civilities of Franks and Goths, the wonder is,—not that the Roman monuments of Nismes should be something the worse for wear, but that they should be still perfect enough to excite the warm admiration of all who behold them. Perhaps, were these memorials of the past more perfect, we should find them less impressive. The decomposition of the solid temple, raised with masses hewn out of the marble quarry or the granite rock, is slow as the footstep



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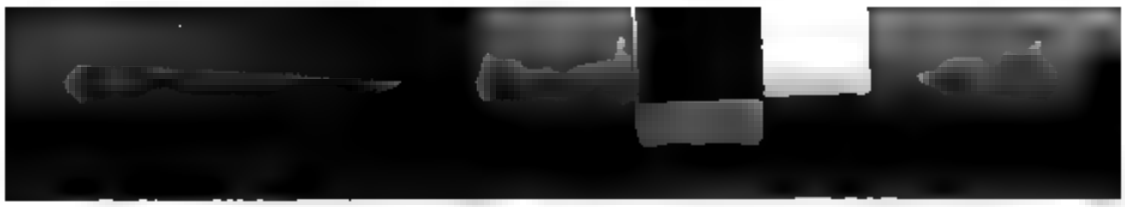


garment of want and misery, growing hourly more rent and threadbare, ceases to be picture when it becomes pain, as the sight of actual decadency always does, dress it up how we may.

A winding walk of easy ascent, and in good order, carried us through shrubberies and groves of evergreens to a terrace midway up the semicircular hill: this terrace must be delicious in winter, always verdant, sheltered, and if there be but a ray of sunshine, sure of drawing it into its bosom. A charming view; the garden fore-ground with its fountain and its foliage, the encircling hills, the eastern cypress looking up and imaging eternity, the ruins crumbling earthwards and depicting time. We ascended to the Tour Magne,* which being now used as a telegraph, is no longer open to strangers. A man, apparently on duty, who sat on a stone with a hopeless, dismal face, as if he had watched from the palace roof at Argos for the whole ten years—all but one day, without catching a glimpse of the beacon fire, forbade our approach. So we looked at the view—greatly

* One of the towers of the Roman walls which enclosed Nismes, and probably so called from being the largest, and appropriated to some distinct purpose.

talked of, but we thought of more extent this beauty,—nothing to the look from the sunny terrace in the hollow of the evergreen hill; but the sun glared, and when it does, certain views seem sometimes bleached and stony, that in the light of evening, or the red dawn, are full of charm. Some broken eminences, covered with vineyards and olive gardens with a villa dotted here and there, screened the descent from the Tour Magne: they are in a warm, pleasing tone, and form one of the most agreeable bits of the picture.

As we quitted the gardens, two persons passed us followed by a crowd of idlers, who seemed attracted by the singularity of their costume. We inquired who they were; one said Poles, another Greeks, a third Egyptians. A man near me, happy to bolt out a high-sounding word, as the schoolmaster of whom Erasmus makes mention when he lighted on an old one, exclaimed "Zoroasters!" But they proved to be St. Simonians, and there they stood hemmed in and obviously gratified by the curiosity of the populace, who seemed to consider them as amusing mummers. Nothing could be more ludicrous than the air of benign importance with which they turned to the right

and to the left, as if to exhibit (according to the fashion of their Father Enfantin) *la puissance d'un regard*; or the insufferable self-complacency with which they looked down, like itinerant tooth-drawers, on the congregated rabble.

Like most of the large towns in Languedoc, Nismes announces itself speciously; with broad boulevards, fine public buildings, handsome houses, and all the apparel of a capital. Its magnificent monuments are all in what may be called the suburbs, meeting you at the turn of a corner as if they were every day objects; but the actual old town is here, as at Carcassonne, Narbonne, &c., a nest of narrow streets, little more than depôts for merchandise; with here and there a large house in a court, or, if there be a space or an angle wide enough to hold it, a préfecture or an episcopal palace, with three or four old-fashioned mansions sticking close to it. The Roman remains, which render Nismes particularly interesting, are all so placed, that the eye of the spectator easily removes itself to a favourable distance, from which it takes in the whole of its object in one unfrittered view. The mean houses which formerly shouldered the Maison Carrée, have all been swept away, and a

spacious area, enclosed by iron railing, separates this beautiful relic of the past from the surrounding buildings. The amphitheatre, too, is handsomely isolated, and from the wide space in which it stands, its full effect is received at once; while the temple of Diana becomes its shade, its quiet, and its fountains, as the grotto of Egeria does its silent valley.

Few things unlock the springs of thought so rapidly as those fine records of the far-off past, which still stand amongst us like the spectres of the hallowed dead, that rose up and went abroad into the streets bearing witness. History is thus told by signs more expressive than words: we not only hear of the Romans, but we see their works; their magnificent conceptions and prodigious means of execution, their luxury, refinement, grandeur, and cruelty, are all brought before us in a single frame. The lofty splendour of their public edifices, and the record graven on them of their sometimes barbarous, sometimes noble uses, remain as witnesses, not only of their minds and means, but of their tastes and habits. No written history can bring before us the Romans and their times as do these monuments; here are structures raised by

their hands, altars at which they have knelt, seats on which they have reposed; their power and their purposes are kept alive in their works—brought palpably before us, while history seems but the clothing of tradition.

I once heard a person say, "I don't believe a word of *Macbeth*: were I to go to Scotland and to see Dunsinane, perhaps I might—witches and all; but not till then." And yet who ever knew the power of words as Shakspeare did? who like him could coin them into images? In his hands words find their real uses; they embody thought, create ideas, quicken memory, charm, elevate, touch, inspire, and playing on the strings of the passions, strike out that sympathetic tone which understands and answers to their language. And yet this person, whose imagination remained unaffected by the force of words so wielded, was convertible by the palpability of stone and mortar.

Left Nismes this morning,—a holiday, and the grisettes all afloat in their gayest gowns and prettiest ribbons. The people here look cheerful and industrious, and seeing them so, with their pleasant walks, and green gardens, and sunny world about them, one wishes to forget—but cannot

always,—the horrors of the Cours Neuf and the Chemin de Montpellier, in the terrible reaction of 1815. These southern spirits that fly along enjoyingly, are fearful ones when excited; the old barbed dagger of religious animosity is always here,—hidden sometimes, but ready to unsheath itself at the first blood-cry. I knew a man who, speaking of his enemy, used to say, "I hate him religiously—and that's the worst kind of hatred."

Figs, almonds, prunes, olives, quinces, and excellent wines, make part of the commerce of Languedoc; *boutargue*, the roe of the sturgeon pressed into a paste, is another article of trade; mulberries are cultivated, and the shuttle plied in the cottages. Montpellier has a kind of fame for its essences, its verdigris, and its cream of tartar; Narbonne for its cloths, Nismes for its silks. Le vin de Tavel, current in the hotels of Switzerland, is a wine of this country. I have already spoken of the Muscat and Tokay of Lunel, but I had forgotten the Blanquette de Limous, which is sold at ten or twelve sous the bottle, and may (as they tell us) be easily passed off for Champagne.

Good inns in the south,—Hôtel de Luxembourg appeared so to us even after the capital one of Mont-

pellier. An improving country; still vines and olives, but the general foliage more varied, more mixed up of many things; mulberries in great abundance, and farther on the ilex, spreading its sober shade over the hills Stopped at La Foux to look at a suspension-bridge over the Gardou, which appears now as if a child could wade it: the bridge is a very elegant ornament and, I suppose, of great utility. Fell in with some familiar trees, very recreative to the home-loving fancy after such leagues upon leagues of vines and olives. They were like the gooseberry-bush to that household spirit, who, banished to some paradise of the tropics, some Eden of guavas and ananas, sickened at the surrounding luxuries; but stumbling by chance upon the old green bush, felt his heart leap within him, and fancied the taste of its poor fruit had love and friendship in it.

When Anson saw in the island of Tinian meadows covered with the common garniture of English fields, and white bulls cropping the butter-cups and trefoil, while the crowing of cocks completing the illusion made him almost fancy himself in England, how his heart must have leaped within him. But the Pont du Gard! the real one!—

the grand and simple Roman aqueduct, with the mellow colouring of almost nineteen centuries glowing on it! I am not fond of lavishing notes of admiration, and never care to use them but when the heart and pen go together; but this merits more than two—more than twenty. How magically it came upon us, suspended as it seemed in the air, and stretching like a phantom from rock to rock, with the blue heavens and the green earth looking in through its wide arches.

Quitting the carriage before we arrived at the aqueduct, we saw from a favourable distance its three rows of arches, hanging one above another until they overtopped the hills which form their side frames. The centre arches have a breadth, a lightness, an incomparable beauty, of which models and engravings can convey no idea. Through the lower ones the tufted wood, the silent glen, the lonely river, are seen in half shadow,—every thing around wears the character of profound repose; beyond, looking still forward through the arches, is the narrow valley, wild and still, through which the river creeps as if afraid to startle by its murmurs the genius of solitude who sleeps within its shade. Turning to look back, another part of the

same valley appears widening gradually into a broad distance, but still with the same character of loneliness, and the same silent river pouring its shrunk stream along a rocky strand, shaded by the broad branches of a few fine trees; above rises the close foliage of the ilex tufting the hills, and over all a sky in perfect harmony with the colouring of the landscape; a grey sky streaked with light clouds, warm and stationary.

Nothing can be imagined more perfect than the position of this exquisite monument. Drawn across a sylvan valley, finding its support in the wild hills on which its arches rest, not overpowered by the magnitude of surrounding objects, with no background to wall it up and shut out the heavens, not barely sharing admiration with the mighty works of nature, not rivalled—or distanced, by them; but having in its poetic solitude all that befits the character of its beauty, all that a contemplative mind or romantic fancy can desire.

CHAPTER XIX.

AVIGNON—COUP D'ŒIL — ETYMOLOGY — LA VILLE SONNANTE—ROCHER DE DON—OLD NAMES AND NEW—ASSOCIATIONS—LA MISERICORDE—GRAVE OF LAURA—THE MUSEUM — VAUCLUSE, ANOTHER TIME — ULTRA PLATONISM—THE CANON AND THE LADY—ROYAL RHYMES.

Rocky and wild towards Avignon, and only partially cultivated: dropped down amongst some oaks, and saw Mont Ventoux looking out of Dauphiné at us. Country more fertile and agreeable, and then again barrenness,—till at last we came suddenly upon the noble plain from which the castellated walls of Avignon rise up proudly.

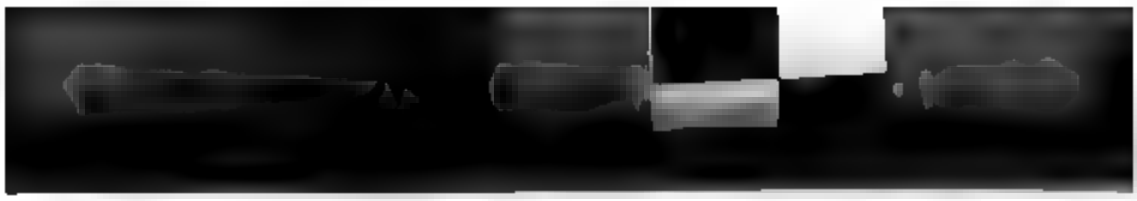
The burst was fine, and we took it in a moment of great splendour, with the evening sun upon it—a moment when it was all glowing in a rich southern light, and were surprised and charmed. The city thus seen, has the appearance of a vast metropolis, with spires, towers, rocks, and battlements, which the eye mistakes at first for fortresses. The long wooden bridge over the Rhone has lost two

centre arches, swept away by the ice in the rigorous winter of 1829, and a temporary bridge of boats supplies its place; an old stone bridge with broken arches serves, like the battlements, for picture, though not for use, and another wooden one crosses a second branch of the river, which is at present on its good behaviour and agreeably demure, but tremendous in its angry moments. Avignon has its traditional etymology. A temple consecrated to Diana rose above the banks of the Rhone, and as the boatmen passed beneath it, they lifted up their voices to the divinity, crying "Ave Diana!" The goddess went out of fashion, but the words, which by a little corruption became Aveniane, and by a little more Avignon, have stuck to the spot.

An excellent inn (l'Hôtel de l'Europe) situated, as usual, rather on the outskirts of the town, but within the gates; opposite to it is the house in which General Le Brun was massacred by an infuriated populace; and not far distant the cathedral with its silver bell (that only tolls at the death of a Pope) and its tower of doleful recollections. Perhaps the same revolution that made the one a record of its crimes, melted down the other; how-

ever, if the siver bell no longer tolls, others do, and with sufficient vigour at this moment to entitle Avignon to the epithet of *la ville sonnante*, which Rabelais bestowed upon it.

To strengthen the impression which the fine and striking aspect of Avignon makes when first approached, and before the mean details of the close interior have effaced it, one should ascend the Rocher de Don, and look round on the noble and varied view which it commands. Below is the town enclosed within its beautiful battlements, and thickly set with the multitudinous spires and domes of its ancient religious edifices,—now in many instances turned to worldly purposes; beyond the walls, other structures appear amidst groves of southern verdure, and the eye easily converts them into temples, suiting them to the Italian atmosphere and character of the scene, though probably they are only village churches. The papal palace, now converted into a barrack and a prison, rises immediately before the eye, storied over with many memories, and flanking it the cathedral with its Roman cupola. On the opposite bank of the river is a ruined castle, looking like a fragment of the city though separated from it by the broad Rhone,



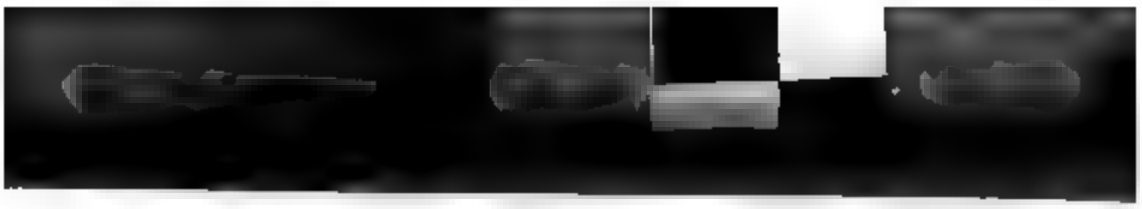
which, dividing itself into two branches, meanders through a fertile stretch of garden plains, and is lost amidst the hills that draw their circling screen round this beautiful and balmy region.

Mont Ventoux is the boldest feature of the chain, the rocks of Vaucluse the most interesting. The iris of love, and faith, and poetry, is on them; and while I looked upon their purpling heights, my fancy made out a spot in which it placed the town of Carpentras, where Petrarch, enamoured of study and pleased with the scenes which recalled the sweet season of his meditative childhood, consecrated his leisure to those labours, whose fruits procured for him in after time the blended wreath of poetry and learning.

There are some details in this charming view, that come out to eyes that search for them like the fibres of a leaf, which in the broad mass of foliage are passed over unheeded. Sometimes a light colonnade, a hanging terrace, or perhaps a tall pine orientalizes the distant buildings; the colouring of the houses is mellow, their roofs covered with the convex tile (*à dos d'âne*), which, when its tone is subdued by, time as it is here, has a very soft and pleasing effect,—there is no glare,

no red, but a sort of pale tint with a shade of rust on it, that when the sun shines, warms itself into beauty. Nothing so cold as the effect of a fine blue sky spread over hard and glaring objects; so far from drawing them up to its tone, they appear to grow colder under its influence; but in the south, the earth and skies seem to have a secret understanding, and hence the charm of the scenery. To one who loves as I do the old historical names of the French provinces, and disdains the convenient distribution of departments and their new appellations, this view has a particular charm: the old names are still the abiding ones; and while a man who pointed out some of its beauties to us mingled together the names of Provence, Languedoc, and Dauphiné, I thought how mean and poor the Var, and the Gard, and the Drôme sounded.

One cannot touch this soil, one cannot hear these fine old names pronounced without a sudden rush backwards of the mind into those times of poetry, romance, devotion, and chivalry, when the Counts of Provence influenced their people to the love and cultivation of the arts, making another Bagdad of their capital. These old names, whether they be of places or of people, have downright magic in



them. Alphonso, Count of Toulouse, and Raymond Beranger, Count de Provence, with their gently baptized wives Faydide and Douce, give you in the bare sound of their historical appellations whole quires of troubadour rhymes and chivalric records. I cannot bear disturbing an old name, unless it be a degraded one: Countess of Roussillon,—how well it sounds; make a river of her, a modern one, and Shakspeare could hardly keep her floating.

Perhaps this is carrying the matter a little too far; but there is infinite magic in a name, it so soon takes a character if there be one to take, and then lives and dies bound up with it.

There was no getting into the cathedral: we knocked at the great door, and then at the small one, as some respectable-looking persons standing by told us to do, but found no access. Its neighbour, the old papal palace, has now two distinct appropriations; barred windows at one side, and military trappings at another, explain its present uses. The associations connected with this palace are feeble compared with those encrusted into the walls of the Lateran or the Vatican; removed from the old seat of government, the Popes seem

to have left, not only the strength and individuality of power behind them, but to have stripped their state of that species of local and mechanical reverence which had so long sustained it.

Met, as we returned, a group of unfortunate Poles, standing about with the air of German students, and no doubt the sad hearts of exiles. Avignon has been assigned to them by government as a sort of frontier prison: they were received here (we are told) without sympathy; and yet their melancholy position might well excite, and their devoted patriotism justify it. The town is said to be eminently Carlist, resenting still the revolution of whose horrors it was the victim. Many of the churches and religious houses have been destroyed, and others appropriated to lay purposes; but there seems a plenitude of priests, as in all the southern towns of France.

At La Miséricorde (a hospital for the insane) a crucifix, carved in ivory * and of the most exquisite workmanship, was shown to us. It had been contemplated with admiration by Canova, and the sister who accompanied us repeated this with pride; a pride which though only relative, seemed from

* By Johannes Guillarmin, (1659).

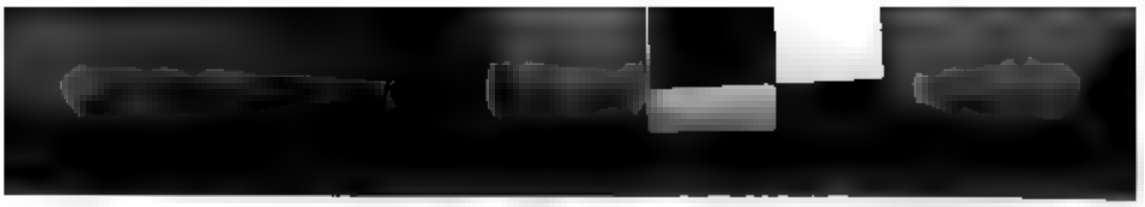
its warmth to be personal. To these poor nuns the feminine feeling of vanity is interdicted, at least where they themselves are concerned, but it is not annihilated; the object is only changed,—transferred from the individual to the carved crucifix, the sculptured saint, the curtained picture, or the altar bouquet.

This hospital is under the care of nuns, sisters of charity, but subject to stricter rules than those by which the order is in general governed: these meritorious women undertake the entire superintendence of the lunatic patients, and perform their arduous task with admirable courage and tenderness. Our guide was a quiet spirit, full of pious humility, working purely for the love of God,—without thought of applause, or consciousness of merit. I asked her if she could quit the order if she pleased: she said not, but that the superior had the power of transferring any member of her community into any other hospital where her services might be wanted. They only went out (she added) to attend on the sick or the dying—it was their duty; they were here on earth to perform it. "If it was the plague, (said I, stupidly enough,) you would not be afraid?"—"What (she replied with

great simplicity) should I be afraid of? Not surely of going a little before my time."

We had some difficulty in finding out the grave of Laura, even after we had got into the garden of the Cordeliers, or what had once been so. At length we stumbled on a woman, who led the way into a damp corner, where we found something like a wretched sort of tea-house arbour, with a stout column in the middle of it, occupying nearly the whole of a spot scarcely large enough for one of those drawing-room shafts which usually support the delicate bust of a Muse or a Venus; indeed, we could barely make our way round it without getting entangled in the briars. An English *milor*, the woman told us, had given, or rather was to give, the column. This was the model; but it was to be executed in marble, with an urn on the top; and when it was placed, the briars were to be cleared away, and the spot, to use a vulgar but appropriate expression, tidy'd up.

Poor Laura! she no longer sleeps in this sloppy corner; her ashes were scattered by the Vandals of the revolution, and the place of her grave is unhonoured, except by strangers. Like that of the fair girl of Verona, whose tomb was, when we



saw it, placed like a water-trough under a spout in an open court, abandoned to the stray homage or conjectures of those who had learned her story from the poet of their hearts; and yet, when living, how they were loved! But poetical recollections are not kept holy here: we found La Santa Chiara turned into a baker's shop; and as we quitted the grave of Laura, some dyers, who were at work in an adjoining yard, smiled at us contemptuously. Madder has conquered poetry; it is the staple commodity of Avignon, and the trade of love has been abandoned for that of a dye stuff.

The Museum is in a sad litter; it is only *provisoire*, the porteress told us, which in France generally means *permanent*. This active functionary, porteress, guide, and puffer, would have made a splendid Diana: we admired her full-chiselled lips, and light eyes with long black eyelashes, and likewise her want of learning,—a great blessing, for cicerones are terrible people in general. As to the pictures, they are in such a wretched light, that there would have been some difficulty in making them out, even if it had been a bright day instead of a very murky evening. The Vernets, a family in which distinguished talent seems

hereditary, being natives of this town, (as our directing divinity informed us,) have the best places assigned to them. There are two rigid portraits of Petrarch and Laura; he a canon, but no lover—or poet either, and she as stiff as Catharine Bore.*

I think we saw nothing else at Avignon, except the boulevards and some very pretty women. The peasant girls wear a cap without a border, bound round the head with a broad ribbon—generally black, crossed behind, and tied in a large bow before; when smartly put on, it is rather becoming: in the towns the ribbon is discarded, and the white skull-cap worn, (but only by the females of the humbler classes,) with the strings flying. On Sundays the gay ones set off this pauper head-dress with showy earrings and neck ornaments of gold; and thus embellished, look like the rustic madonnas of a country chapel, and quite as proud of their finery as the queen-cow of a Swiss herd is said to be of her huge bell.

We had reserved this morning for Vaucluse; but L—— has been a little indisposed for some days, and though he would willingly have gone

* Luther's wife.

with us out of kindness, yet we think it more prudent to get on to Marseilles, where, if necessary, we can procure good advice. It is mortifying to be so near that vale of sweet and limpid waters, and still more of sweet and immortal recollections, and yet to turn away from it; but we say "another time," and with this hope we leave Vaucluse behind us.

Perhaps before that other time comes, we may see the lonely tomb

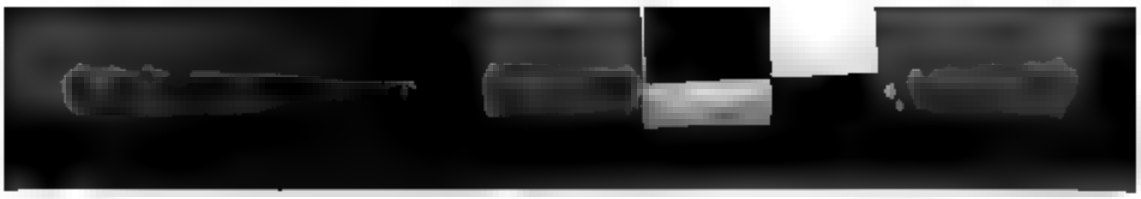
- - - "three leagues from Padua."

At Avignon the name of Petrarch is the common music of the air; every breeze is full of it,—one thinks of nothing else, except perhaps of the Popes, those old men in their mantles who rise up before us like the ghost of Samuel; and yet his love affair is certainly one of the most unnatural on record, though embalmed in such a river of amber, so gracefully and tenderly enshrined, that we forget its absurdity.

The souls of most lovers are like the statue of Memnon, which when the sun shone upon it gave out soft and melodious sounds, but in the darkness of the night uttered only broken or mournful murmurs. But Petrarch dispensed with the

warmth of real sunshine, and sang in the paler glow of his imagination; and in such strains of soft and skyey melancholy, that the soul is won by them, though the inspiring feeling may be often too fanciful for sympathy; for that a passion presumed to be unshared by its object—a passion unsustained by hope, without one intimate link, one recollected avowal, one feeling of full and perfect reciprocity to fasten on, and only fed by unfrequent glimpses of decaying beauty, should have survived the fortieth year of its idol, and that idol a staid matron and the mother, if the common reading be the true one, of eleven children, is a thing almost too incredible to be within reach of fellow feeling.

A beautiful object casually and imperfectly known, may excite a sentiment of admiration, and even for a time of something which a romantic imagination may deem—and perhaps feel, to be passion. But to perpetuate this sentiment during a period of twenty years, the close and endearing ties of tried affection, of proved faith, must knit their strength together, and working into the heart, establish the dominion of habit,—habit grown out of the tenderest sympathies, habit



which once was passion, but which has changed with time into the sweetest of all calm feelings,—entire reliance.

I once read somewhere of a man who fell in love with Clarissa Harlowe, and not only went into mourning for her himself, but put all his establishment into black. But whether the passion (if so it may be called) of Petrarch had its root in the heart or the fancy, whether its object was the wedded Laura de Sade or the maiden Laura de Baux, it has secured to him the immortal laurel; and there he sits enwreathed, a bright star in the poetic firmament, whose mild and constant light will probably outlive the blaze of many a meteor.

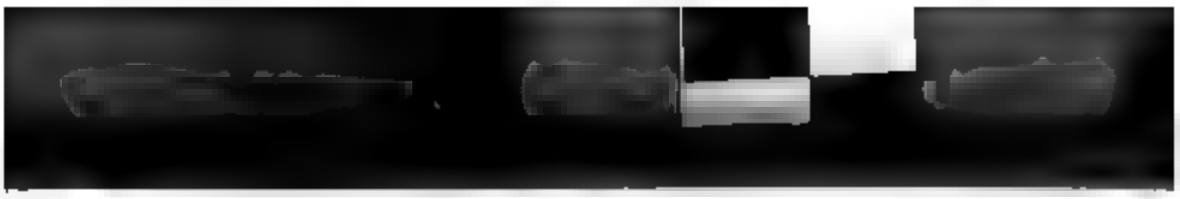
After all, I am afraid that the learned canon, if not a mere iris worshipper, was but a leather-mouthed fish, which may be caught (I think old Izaak tells us) with any kind of live fly, and never lets go its hook; and the bright lady a wily angler, who manœuvred her artificial bait with consummate skill, playing off its foil wings gleamingly and drawing on the duped fish, while she herself reposed in the cool sedges, calculating on the length of line which might be safely given to hope without allowing it to knit itself into certainty.

It was coquetry playing with the imagination, not with the heart, for that would have found out the cheat by the quick sensitiveness of instinct.

Francis the First was not a Petrarch in his loves; but at the sight of Laura's tomb,—whom living he would probably have considered as a very insipid woman, he was moved even to verse; witness the *quatrains* still repeated in his name:—

" En petit lieu compris, vous pouvez voir
Ce qui comprend beaucoup de renommée;
Plume, labeur, la langue, et le devoir,
Furent vaincus par l'aimant de l'aimée.

O gentille ame! étant tant estimée
Qui te pourra louer qu'en ne taisant;
Car la parole est toujours réprimée,
Quand le sujet surmonte le disant."



CHAPTER XX.

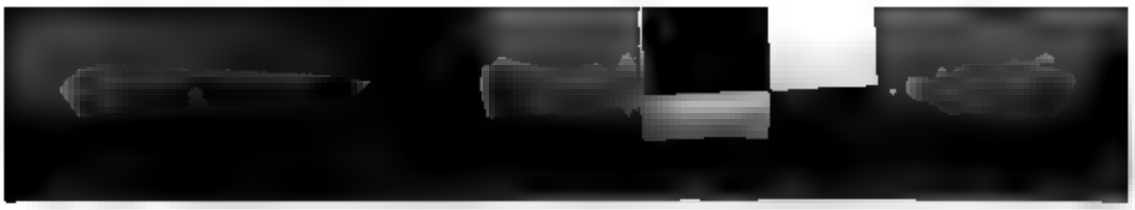
COUNTRY TO AIX—AFFECTIONATE PUBLICANS—AIX AS IT SEEMS, AND AS IT WAS—CATHEDRAL—THE TEMPLE AND GATES — ROMAN BATHS — LANGUEDOC — COUNTRY TO MARSEILLES — CORDON SANITAIRE — FIRST BURST OF MARSEILLES—LA VISTA— THE PORT—CLIMATE—EASTERN CHARACTERS AND ANCIENT CUSTOMS—MARSEILLES AND BORDEAUX—THE CATHEDRAL—THE LEGEND.

Avignon to Aix,—again grass fields and stubbles, and a greater variety of trees and culture than heretofore; in short, a reprieve,—perhaps only a short one, from the vine and olive. Mulberries still deliciously green, long lines of cypresses planted close, as if to screen out the wind, and houses with some shade about them. Passed the Durance over a wooden bridge, (a marvel they say,) which I expected would have reached to Aix. Did not know that Noves was Noves* until we had left it behind us; so no need of an "O thou!" or a "Pure lady!" Some bright verdure about

* The birth-place of Laura.

Orgon, and good trees now and then. At Pont Royal an *abreuvoir*, agreeably shaded with plane trees; but no positive beauty any where. Have heard Lambese praised, but could not judge of it. Cheerless rain, and a wet fog on the hills,—not a stationary one and palpable, like our great London fogs, of which one may cut off a slice and send it out as a pattern; but a sort of flying mist, that one can look through but yet see nothing. Almonds in great abundance; and often in the little towns a few large trees form a pleasant shade in the rectangle, or triangle, of petty dimensions, which calls itself La Place.

The publicans in Provence have a pretty fatherly or motherly way (as it happens) of recommending their houses to the passing traveller: "Père des Compagnons,"—"Mère des Compagnons," is the tender substitute for "La Croix Rouge," or "Le Cygne Blanc." Sometimes a gay board beckons invitingly—"Au Repos des Enfans;" nor is "L'Auberge Economique," which perhaps seduces the greatest number, forgotten. A stony soil, frequently impoverished by rocks, but cultivated up to its capabilities, and thickly dotted with fruit-trees: cottages small but neat, at least externally,



and smartly roofed with pale tiles. Thickly peopled as we approached Aix, which presents its broad Cour immediately to the eye on entering; but the fine elms which formerly shaded and embellished it, were cut down in the days of July,—some say to prevent their being blown down, time having loosened their roots as if they had been old teeth; others, (drolly enough,) to beautify the town; but most likely, the moment considered, for barricades in case of necessity. I do not know whether or not the necessity arrived, but the elms are gone for ever.

There are some fine ones still in the Place des Prêcheurs; not so fine however (we are told) as the old glorious ones of the Cours, but a blessing in this country of stunted trees and grey foliage. The good old René, whose statue decorates the Cours, could not know his own Aix again were he to come to life in it: it is no longer the city of shows and festivals, of counts and troubadours; the best houses look empty and desolate, and there is a general air of uninhabitation about them. According to our cicerone, the town was ruined by the revolution, and not restored by the restoration; it has broad, well-built, handsome streets,

but no life, no arterial action,—at least in the aristocratical quarter; all the movement is in the markets and shop-streets, where the large black hat of the market-girls makes a pretty effect, and the nunnish hood a very demure one. In country towns the fine quarter is always the dull one; here it is the deserted. Probably in the summer evenings,—the cocks and hens being dislodged from the roof of the family coach,—ancient ladies may dowager it up and down the Corso after the fashion in hot countries; but to-day I have not seen a wheel. Good aristocratical society, an Englishman once resident here told me, laying a great stress on the last word but one,—old provincial noblesse, who never visit Paris or vary their forms of life, but preserve intact the high urbanity, with something of the stateliness of ancient manners.

When Aix was the court of the Counts of Provence, and the nursery of the troubadours; when Alphonso the Second, king of Arragon, held his state there, making verses and singing them—doubtless to the admiration of high ladies and supple minstrels; and Raymond Beranger and the fair Beatrix encouraged and caressed the arts, Aix had its own pedestal, and became it. René, too,

did all he could—though often with better intention than taste, to prolong or rather revive the era of its magnificence. Of modern names which have become European ones it has its list, at the head of which stand those of Mirabeau, Tournefort, Vauvenargues, the Vanloos, (or at least the elder,) and the wise and learned Nicholas Claude Seigneur de Peirese, who should have been first named in point of date, and to whom we owe the introduction of the Angora cat and the oleander: no deduction from his wisdom or his learning either, no more than from the piety of St. Louis, for having made us acquainted with the ranunculus.

The cathedral is an ancient building with a handsome porch, curious in its details, but not (I thought) interesting in its general effect. The *office* was performing as we entered, so we sat down outside the choir until the canons had sung out their litanies, which they did droningly, in a half-asleep, humming-top sing-song. But suddenly, a boy with a clear bell-toned voice took up the chaunt and sent it ringing to the roof of the building, where it ended, like a rocket, in an exulting burst. If the boy had not been before my eyes, I should have fancied him hidden in the

dome. When the service was over, we had to run the gauntlet of the regular sights,—first a picture, representing St. Denis carrying his head in his hand; then one in which King René is seen at his devotions, with his mild wife opposite to him,—*presumed* to have been painted by himself; and some faded tapestry that had travelled from our St. Paul's to Aix, our guide said, but knew not when or how.

This same showman,—"captain, or colonel, or knight in arms," but most probably beadle, was magnificently arrayed in scarlet with a silver-hilted sword, which so embarrassed his movements that he was obliged to deposit it in a corner. This eminent personage pointed out to us a rotunda supported by columns of great ascribed antiquity, which forms one of the lateral chapels; it is used as a baptistry, but is called the temple of Diana notwithstanding. His ideas on the subject of 'the great goddess' were rather confused; I fancy he thought her a sort of saint—perhaps a martyr—who had good right to her shrine, and would probably have shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" with all his lungs, if any Demetrius had been there to set him the example. Saw no other

churches. The fine spire of St. John's, in the pointed or gothic style, was the only thing shown to us as remarkable.

The gates of the cathedral are of walnut wood, beautifully carved, and usually concealed by shutters; but our scarlet man unclosed them with a fracas, itemed at least at forty sous. Saw the baths as we returned—the actual marble baths of the Romans, a pretty woman who showed them to us assured me gravely; and then hurried back to the inn, lest our invalid should think us tardy, but found him surprised at our dispatch.

Aix may be, and they say is, pleasantly surrounded; but here, as elsewhere, the dust puts in its caveat against beauty. Hills towards Marseilles carved into terraces, and industriously cultivated; clumps of wood, and now and then a good Italian bit with rich pines, and mulberries green as emeralds, that preserve at a little distance a very orange-tree air. Houses a dull yellow, not glaring.

We have now passed through a considerable part of Languedoc, and a portion of Provence, and I must say that, as far as we have seen, this minstrel land does not bear out its romantic repu-

tation; and yet it is the very land of the story-teller, as far as sound goes. Here indeed are the vine-covered hills, but then the plant does not hang in festoons, or wreath itself into graceful garlands, as in Italy; it does not beautify every plain-featured spot into the scene of a *fête champêtre*,—it is a mere current bush: the almond too grows wild, and when there is a hedge, usually makes it, unless its place be taken up by the quince, which is as common as the bramble. Olives also abound, but the almond is little better than the hedge willow, the olive (as it is here) hardly so good, and the quince on a level with the crab-apple; the pomegranate indeed is beautiful, but it does not make a leading feature, only a casual embellishment. The Languedoc which we have seen is a rich and highly cultivated country, except where, from the rockiness of the soil, it becomes incapable of benefiting by man's labour; but it is not the Languedoc of Mrs. Radcliffe's beautiful reveries. Long and low ranges of hills intersect it, and sometimes open on wide vales that make us think of our own more lovely ones,—our corn, and cattle, and meadow vales, with the river gliding mildly through the dappled meads, and the handsome

town thereby, whose cathedral spire marks distance by the word of God; but as far as we can judge, there is little picture and less romance. The general character of the scenery is tame,—seldom more than pleasant, often dry and dull; country houses (except perhaps a few in the neighbourhood of the large towns) raw and shadeless, cottages without rural beauty; a general want of forest timber, but very fine platanes occasionally, and sometimes a sprinkling of other trees. Striking towns handsomely embellished,—industrious, populous, and thriving, with spacious houses, beautiful gardens and, no doubt, valuable resources, tread closely upon each other's heels; but the breath of poetry, the colouring of romance, the story of other times—as it especially belongs to this southern land, are rarely felt, or seen, or read, in its present atmosphere or living page.

We have not, it is true, seen the mountainous parts, always the most interesting and characteristic. We know nothing of the wild and (as it is said) beautiful recesses of the Cevennes, nor of many other spots of fair report. Cultivated plains, low hills rocky and scantily wooded; scatterings of olives (none of good growth) and other fruit

trees; narrow streams bordered by rows of poplars, ash, willow, &c., with sometimes a clump branching out more freely, or a single tree of darker foliage, are the general features both of Languedoc and the part of Provence which we have seen. Breaks of the Mediterranean are sometimes caught, as from the Peyrou of Montpellier; and now and then a fine land-stretch as from Béziers, or a valley of sequestered beauty like that of the Pont du Gard; but there is little to realize our fond, early fancies, little on which expectation can repose satisfied: the agricultural labour is industriously performed, the soil usually repaying, but the interest as well as the beauty very much confined to the towns and their surroundings. One charming feature—the luxury of flowers, which in summer enrich the meadows with their soft enamel, is now made over to the hedges; the scythe has mowed down all the bell tribes and star tribes, the velvet pods and honey tubes, that in summer time make a garden of the land, and surprise us northerns by the boldness with which their green-house daintiness exposes itself to the elements. But we are now advancing towards the Provence of the Mediterranean, to which report

ascribes the sky, the vegetation, and the poetic colouring of Italy.

As we move onwards towards Marseilles, (four posts from Aix,) we find ourselves in a narrow valley—all pine woods; then comes a wider one, wooded also, and with sometimes a ruin or a calcined looking town, hanging upon the hills. Beautiful avenues verging off from the road, like Watteau's garden alleys, but seeming to lead to nothing; perhaps in our hasty passing we overlooked the château, which may be very evident notwithstanding, and probably is so; for in France a château rarely runs away from the road, and knows nothing of our contrivances for shutting in and shutting out. Some singular-looking rocks, capriciously indented and very castle-like, break in upon the modest line of the hills; I thought them beautiful, encrusted as they were with innumerable tints that seemed burned into them. After these comes barrenness,—and now the *cordon sanitaire*.

Nothing can be imagined more ridiculous than the judicial inspection to which we were submitted. A gens d'arme opened the door of the carriage, and showed us the necessity of descending; we did so,

and were ushered into a sort of booth, where, being ranged in a row like a family of royal tigers, a polite person, a medical man I suppose, and whom I could not help pitying for the stupid part allotted to him, presented himself and looked intently into our eyes, as if he were examining those of the wonderful child, who had Napoleon marked on one pupil and Emperor on the other. But the scrutiny ended here; there was no question of either pulse or tongue. We would have said something of our not having come from the cholera quarter, but he required no farther testimony; our eyes (two pair of which were certainly rather jaundiced) he civilly considered as a sufficient bill of health, and dismissed us with a bow which might have passed for an apology.

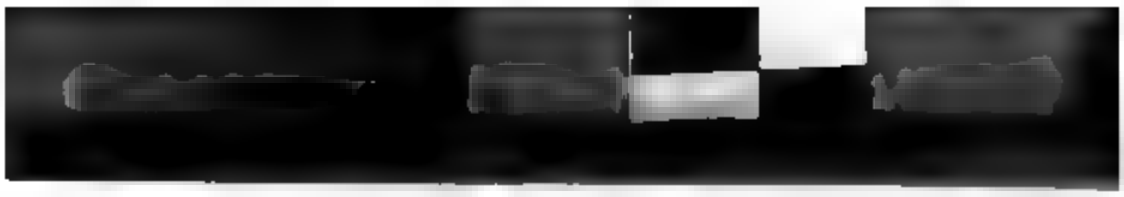
I should think, by the red, green, and yellow houses that flaunt in every vineyard, that Marseilles is not far off, though nothing of it is yet visible. Some soldiers, who have grown loving over their cups, stand by the road-side blubbering and grasping hands,—nothing so mollifying as brandy; at the maudlin point it is all tears and tenderness, full of grief as an elegy, and open-hearted as a cut orange. Out of London and its

environs, I have not seen so much waggon and cart work as on this road: remarked the rapid circulation of merchandise before we arrived at Aix, and the frequency of the small white buildings set out for the accommodation of carters and wayfarers, with tables neatly spread out under a light shed covered with branches of fir, where cool tissane and sliced lemons screen out the less harmless beverages that occupy the back-ground.

As we proceed the houses thicken, and the country to a considerable extent is closely spotted over with buildings; masses of dark pine repose the eye, and a fine stretch of rocks in deep shadow bar the horizon. We had scarcely said "this is fine," when Marseilles and its superb bay opened on us like a vision of Tyre or Epirus. The Mediterranean was in perfect tone—not blue and glittering, but of "a pleasant, sad, sea-water green;" the sun thinly veiled, but sending down a strong, concentrated light on one spot, which shone like an inverted planet on the face of the waters. The islands within the gulph, though not dream-like as the purple Caprea, recall the bay of Naples; while the Château d'If brings back the memory of La Chapelle, Mirabeau, and the lettres-de-cachet

régime. To the left sits Marseilles, which seems continued far into the country by the innumerable *bastides* that dot the vineyards and olive-grounds; to the right is an irregular, projecting land, that gently interrupts the sweep of the bay; and encircling all, a fine rocky amphitheatre stretching its bold arms into the sea, and holding within them a rich variety of objects, which taken together make a splendid picture.

It was really fine; and to see it better, we got out of the carriage at a spot called La Vista, and descended the hill on foot. The entrance of the town—perhaps I should say the suburbs, is not striking. Looked up at a house, and saw "Rue Pavé d'Amour" painted on it in true finger-post letters; expected to have bolted on the orange and myrtle domains of Cupid, but found ourselves in a shabby quarter, full of small shops and humble occupations. But presently better things appeared, and we arrived at the Hôtel Beauveau by an avenue composed of the broad and animated Cours, planted and thronged like the Boulevards of Paris, and La Rue Cannebiere, which terminates in the port, and is probably one of the widest and liveliest streets in Europe.



Stepped at once into handsome apartments looking on the port, which presents a bustling and original scene,—a living Vernet. Ships of all nations, sailors of all countries, quays strewed with bales of cotton, cases of dried fruits, cargoes of oranges,—dates, liqueurs, garlic, pomegranates, grain, wood, and the various produce of Spain, Italy, the Levant, West India islands, &c. If there be a spare bit on the pavement, it is instantly covered with hundreds of small round cheeses, earthenware, and innumerable articles of merchandise: between these more stationary objects a sort of running traffic is carried on,—small stalls, lotteries, ballad-singers, hawkers of poultry, game, cigars; and cheap temptations in the form of pastry, rings, painted pipes, foreign birds, and iced waters, occupy every spot, leaving scarcely room enough for the free circulation of those whom business, curiosity, or idleness may bring amongst them. Does any one want a passage to Liguria, Bastia, Ajaccio? he may take one at this moment under our windows; if for the ports of the Levant or the Baltic, the West Indies or the Americas,—a little lower down, where the large vessels lie, and

I have no doubt that he will immediately find what he seeks for.

Sometimes a Greek passes, or a Turk, or a turbaned woman with the mark of the far-off land upon her, or a bearded Jew or thick-coated Norwegian; but this variety does not exist to the extent that I had expected: I had supposed it a leading feature, but it is only an accessary. I had another supposition; to wit, that old Joseph Vernet's animated and sparkling sea-ports might be overcharged, but he is as true as Hogarth; his race of porters—some laden with bales, others rolling barrels, his smoking Turks and sauntering sailors, are all in full existence; so is his very blue sky, we had it yesterday in perfection. The quays are broad and clean, and at the sunny side all glow and sparkle,—indeed only too hot for out-of-doors enjoyment, while what the poets call the noontide hours last. What a climate! almost enough to warm the dead. It is now past five o'clock, (October 26,) and we sit with our windows open; no fire, a tropical sky, and an air that might nourish the most delicate buds of the east,—quite a fire-fly atmosphere, just such a one as fancy bestows

upon an Indian twilight.* Presently we shall have a bright crescent hanging among the masts, while the fires in the sky are still glowing.

If it were not for the mistral——But as yet we know nothing about it, except from hearsay; when it does come it pierces, but is not injurious (we are told) except in complaints of the lungs. A friend who has passed many winters here assures us, that it seldom prevails for more than ten days during the winter, and even then the sunny side of the street is like a green-house. I do not know whether it may be owing to the old connexion† between Marseilles and the Levant, to its Phocian origin, or to its being the first great city of the Mediterranean that we have come to on our journey, but it seems to me to have an eastern colouring that I have not observed in any other of the southern towns hereabouts, and which greatly becomes its eastern skies.

Old writers have preserved the tradition of some of the singular customs in use in Marseilles in the time of its famous republic. Criminals, condemned to death, were made to drink the juice of hemlock,

* Is there such a thing?

† Now reduced, by various causes, almost to nothing.

which was cultivated for the purpose; and old men who could give good reasons for being tired of life, were allowed to do the same, but in public and, like Socrates, in the midst of their friends. Another custom was kept up amongst the worshippers of Diana, who selected a human victim (slave or criminal) which they fattened, cursed, and turned out into banishment, loaded, like the Hebrew scape-goat, with the sins of the people. But the pleasantest of all was that confiding one of lending money to friends on bonds payable in Elysium; business is now carried on in a more matter-of-fact fashion.

The same legend serves for the origin and progress of nearly all the southern towns, I mean in this direction: Phocian, Roman, or fabulous founders; Roman colonizers; barbaric ravagers; religious massacrers; and finally French rulers. Marseilles, honoured and praised by sages, is a lively handsome town; and though it does not offer the same aspect of magnificence or stationary importance which the first view of Bordeaux presents, is, I think, more animated and characteristic. It is "a city of stirs," the streets alive, the shops showy, the people occupied. I believe we saw Bordeaux

in the wrong moment, for she seemed to sit with her hands before her, while Marseilles has every nerve in action. Most of the streets have *trottoirs*, and there are several squares or *places* planted with trees; but I cannot say that the police enforce the necessity of cleanliness with the attention evidently paid to the same object at Bordeaux. Few catalogue articles here; the Hôtel de Ville is reckoned a fine building, and contains two pictures of the plague which depopulated Marseilles in 1720. Unearthed the cathedral after a long hunt, an uninteresting church in a dirty quarter; it is supposed by some old provincial writers to have been anciently a mosque, from the number of Arabian inscriptions found there. One has been thus translated,—" Dieu est le Seigneur seul permanent. C'est ici la sépulture de son serviteur et martyr, qui s'étant confié en la miséricorde de Dieu très haut, il la lui a accordée en pardonnant ses fautes. Joseph fils d'Abdallah, de la ville de Metelen, décédé dans la lune Zilhugé."

At present, the chief glory of the cathedral is the tomb of St. Lazarus, with the real head therein,—as our very fat conductress informed us. To this tomb belongs a pillar elaborately carved, some

ornamental riches, and a legend with which our cicerone was altogether unacquainted.

Three years after the crucifixion of our Saviour, (according to the chronicle,) an open boat was stranded on the coast of Marseilles. In that boat were many of the disciples of Jesus, and with them Mary Magdalen, her sister Martha, and Lazarus their brother; who having been set adrift by the Jews and cast upon a foreign shore, dispersed themselves over the country of Provence, taught Christianity in pagan temples, and scooping hermitages in the rocks, converted the heathen by the influence of their holy example. Here Lazarus the beloved of Christ died a second time, and was buried—as the belief is, in the tomb that goes by his name. To this brief legend, the chronicler adds, that Mary Magdalen had concealed within her bosom a vial, containing the tear which our Saviour shed at the grave of her brother Lazarus in Bethany, and which, after many chances and changes, found a splendid shrine in the abbey of the Trinity at Vendôme, and also a merciful purpose: for the vial being carried yearly in procession on Good Friday, a prisoner expressly chosen as one whose case was "piteux et rémissible," was

appointed to follow it, bearing in his hand a lighted torch; which prisoner received free grace after the ceremonial, in commemoration of the deliverance of Louis de Bourbon, Comte de Vendôme, who being captured at the battle of Agincourt and incarcerated in the tower of London, escaped through his faith in the holy tear.

There is something so beautiful in this human tear, so full of hope to the weak and trembling, so consoling as a symbol of the link—even of affection, which may unite a divine nature to an earthly and erring one, that I have never read those two words, "Jesus wept," without a swell of the heart.

CHAPTER XXI.

MARSEILLES, CONTINUED—NOTRE DAME DE LA GARDE—THE LAZARETTO—MARCHE AUX FLEURS—THE PEOPLE—MARIE DE MEDICIS—THE TIDELESS SEA—BASTIDES—STAGNANT WATER AND ITS ADVANTAGES—AUBAGNE—CUGNES—LE MONASTERE MANQUE — PASS OF OLLIOULES—TOULON.

LIKE Touchstone, "I care not for my spirits, if my legs were not weary;" but to-day they failed me before I had arrived at Nôtre Dame de la Garde, so I lost the celebrated view. A pleasant terrace winds round the hill that leads to it, and commands one of less extent, but still of considerable scope. The sea, the islands, the sweep of scorched hills, and the city with its six thousand bastides, lay before us: it is a view that requires the softening aid of shadows, and we saw it under a vertical sun; the general tone was ashy, it looked like a city built of cinders, and the parched vision turned mechanically to the sea, to repose upon its freshness. This point has not the power or beauty of

La Vista, but commands a closer and fuller view of the town.

No lazaretto accessible,—I mean to curiosity; to get in you must have a plague passport, or your vessel the mark of a pestilent land on her stern. Report calls it the gem of lazarettos, a haven of indolence after the horrors of a sea-voyage; where, if you can forget the friends you are dying to embrace, the business which imperiously demands your presence, the time lost, the plans frustrated by delay, you may be very comfortable. I never was but once in a lazaretto, it was at Leghorn; one solitary man was there performing quarantine, we saw him through a lattice, striding up and down a covered gallery with the chafed air of a wild beast in his den; his dress, which had something eastern in it, was not unfit for sculpture, and if an artist could have seized the quick and perturbed expression of limb and feature, and transferred it to marble, he would have found a fine personification of impatience.

Scarcely any traces of antiquity here, and few modern buildings of any note. Puget did not embellish his native town as Palladio did Vicenza, or San Michele Verona. I did not see the Musée,

so can say nothing of it; it was closed when we went there—I forget why. The liveliest out-of-doors thing here is the Cours, which, though greatly inferior to the Paris Boulevards in breadth, extent, and splendour, recalls them incessantly. Contrary to the arrangement of the latter, the carriages drive at each side and the promenade is in the centre; in the centre, too, is held the flower and fruit-market, and the look through the branches of the trees from the top of the avenue is full of life and character. The spread of huge umbrellas, all white and stationary, that roof the gay stalls, with the continual passing of bustling crowds, become the glittering sky, to-day without a streak in it; and though the details may belong a little to rag-fair, yet the general view is bright and amusing.

No display of flowers, at least to-day; the money of Paris seems to beat the sun of the south all hollow. What beautiful families of plants—pied, streaked, and dappled, are clustered together in the narrow alleys of the Marché aux Fleurs, unfolding their velvet leaves and diffusing their amalgamated perfumes. From the homely, though fragrant wall-flower, early polyanthus, and small

painted pot of dwarf tulips, to the camelia japonica, azalia indica, or glowing cactus, every thing is to be had. The active porter loads his basket or his barrow with the most delicate and precious plants, and receiving his directions from the plumed chasseur or important footman, trots off with his load; while the modest sempstress passes with her small purchase of hearts-ease peeping through the sheet of clean paper, carefully folded round it; and the higgling portress, after having counted the buds of a dozen Bengal rose-trees, decides for a handsome wear-and-tear pot of scarlet geranium, which seems better furnished than its neighbours.

The ancient ladies who presided as Floras in the market to-day, were mounted up on high chairs elevated above their tubs of immortelles, which were, probably owing to the lateness of the hour, their only article of merchandise. For this enduring flower there is always a sure sale—crucifixes, altars, saints, the busts of great men, and of handsome actresses, have all their chaplets of immortelles: it is flung upon the stage; it is suspended over the tombstone; Napoleon, Louis, Charles, have had

theirs; Louis Philippe has his, and Henri Cinq would, like his predecessors, exhaust the stalls, if opportunity offered. In all this scene-shifting nothing seems permanent but the least permanent of nature's gifts—a flower!

This is a lively happy-looking population, seeming as if it had no harm in it; no *Septembrising* visages, that we have seen, nothing that recalls the horrible re-action of 1815; but, on the contrary, honest, good-humoured ones, and a general tone of quiet civility in the particular class of persons with whom strangers have most to do: even on the quays there is no noise but that caused by the inevitable bustle of business, and no apparent disposition to quarrelling or violence. Women fairer of complexion than in many towns less to the south, but not remarkable for beauty,—at least those whom we have seen. Good heads, and sometimes fine ones, amongst the downright peasants, men and women; but nothing of the actual city growth, like the houris of Bordeaux—or their madrasses. Petticoats extravagantly short, stockings of a brownish orange-colour uncomfortably flesh-like, and the general air (I speak only of the *femmes du*

peuple) free rather than coquettish. Marseilles, like all the towns of note in this part of France, has its public library, musée, academy, &c., but no great enthusiasm, it is said, for the sciences or arts. Amongst its cited reputations, Petronius in ancient times, and Puget in modern ones, have the most diffused celebrity; Honoré d'Urfé* being now, as well as his *Astré*, nearly forgotten.

The young men here, professional and otherwise, of the middle ranks, are said to be republicans, the working classes Carlists, and the large remainder lovers of peace. Such, at least, is the schedule of political opinions given to us by those whom experience has rendered competent to judge of such matters: for ourselves, passing strangers as we are, we can know nothing, but we are told that the newspaper *émeutes*, which alarm us at Paris, are mere stage thunder, very fierce and rumbling at a distance, but mere pebbles in a tin canister when examined. Commerce flourishes, and the people—the real *operatives* on such occasions, being fully employed, have no disposition to trouble calm waters.

* Also a native of Marseilles.

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Drove along the shore in the sunbeams, basking in their gentle warmth and enjoying what I dearly love,—the fine aspect and fresh air of the sea. If we could silence fancy, we might well believe this sea the ocean; but we imagine that we ought to miss the tides, and get tired of always seeing the same water-mark. It may be wild and billowy or calm and glassy, dark as a beryl or blue as the bluest sapphire; but it neither comes or goes, and so we begin to fancy that its stationary beauty must have dulness in it, and to recollect that beyond it is another sea, an ocean one, upon whose sands gay elves

- - - "with printless feet
Do chase the ebbing Neptune."

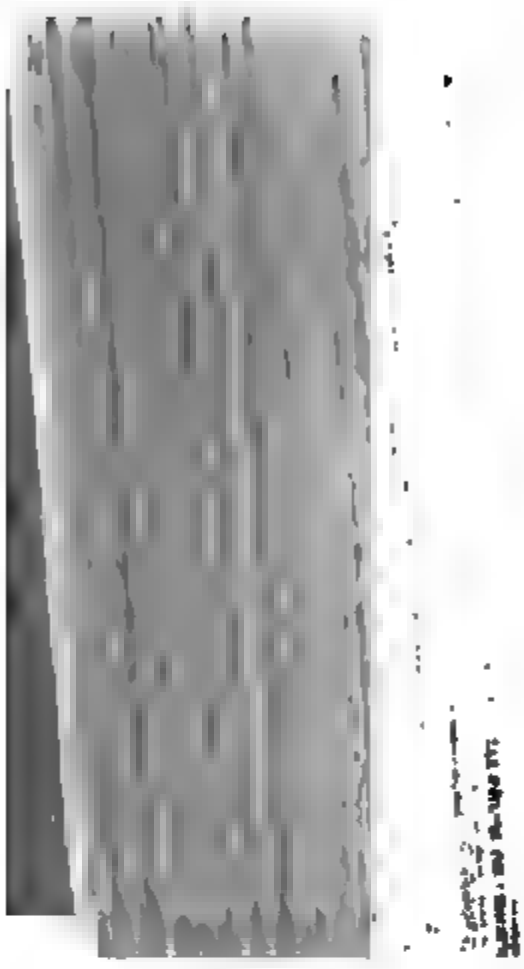
This is human nature, the infant's and the man's; the cake is a good cake, rich and sugared, but if our allotted slice has not a large piece of citron in it, we refuse it poutingly. "All this availeth nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

As we returned, the yellow rays of a descending sun fell on the solitary light-house, that rises alone on its rock in the midst of the waves. Several small barks and light feluccas were standing into shore: two larger vessels were stretching out from it, but making little weigh, for there was not a breath stirring. At the foot of a range of barren but finely-curved rocks, reposed a gathering of bastides of the humbler kind, with pine trees about them that effaced, by their bright deep green, all that remained of summer verdure. These rich tints reconcile us once more to evergreens, for which the small round-about olives, with whose ugliness we have been so long familiar, had almost spoiled our taste,—a great pity, for as we are often thrown upon them for all that the eye can take in of freshness, it would be well if we could preserve intact the grateful affection which we naturally feel for those remnants of the feast that remain after its abundance is over, as if to preserve us from the horrors of inanition.

These bastides are naked contrivances, generally enclosed between stone walls, whose hard lines fret the eye: many of them are made sentry-boxes, "not large enough to live in, nor small enough to

hang to one's watch." Those which we saw had neither shade nor depth enough for coolness; under a strong sun they must blaze like the copper castle in the story, I think, of one of the Calendars. A preferable thing in summer would be a dark dwelling in a narrow street, for there the opposite houses would make shade,—an essential to comfort in a hot climate, which seems altogether overlooked in the construction of a bastide. There are no cool porches, no dark arcades; even the pine-tree is often so disposed, that the interior of the house can receive no advantage from its shade; but probably both windows and blinds are, according to the fashion of the south, closed till the fall of evening, which is, I believe, the true way to keep a house cool, though it is not the pleasantest; for in excluding air and light, we must also exclude the loveliness of earth and the spendour of heaven.

Perceived to-day an unpleasant odour from the water in the port; it is sometimes complained of here, but is said not to be injurious to health; perhaps, like the exhalations from the canals of Amsterdam, it may do good. I once met with a lady, who told me that both herself and her brother had been cured of chest complaints of the



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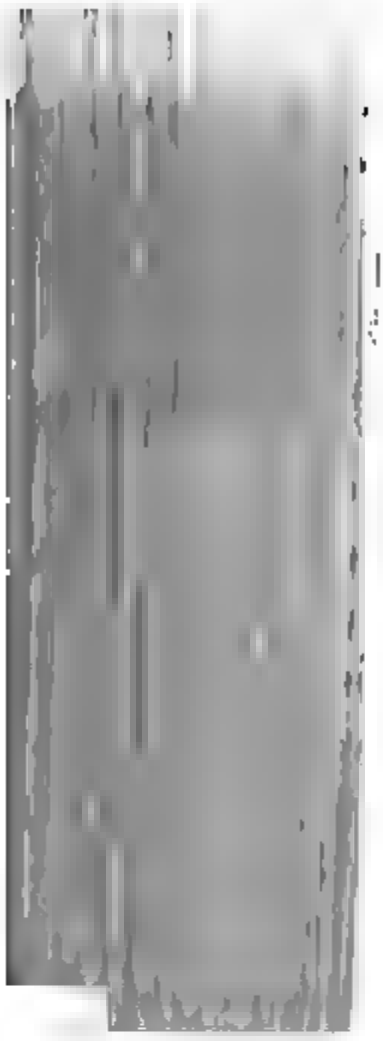
when we at last got beyond them, we found the country beautiful. A charming surface gracefully diversified, the river line—always under the eye, marked by a considerable variety and fulness of foliage, other trees enriching the vineyards and breaking in upon the sameness of the olive, and the finely denticulated wall of rock frequently covered with broad masses of pine.

I was much and unexpectedly pleased; for though rather taken with Marseilles, I had not imagined that its neighbourhood had so much charm about it. Women at Aubagne looking pretty in hats of black beaver, coquettishly put on over large caps. Heard of a valley not far off, and very beautiful, with the ruins of a Cistertian convent making its vignette, but did not see it. The country, as we looked down upon it, seemed paved with vines; found Cujes in the midst of them,—a small town famous for capers, and infamous for bold beggars, who laughed at and scolded us while they asked alms. Mounted up again into a country of rocks and pines; the soft green tops of the young trees mock at winter: from the summit is a wild view, with a pleasant kind of loneliness about it,—something more than grave,



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ruined fortress that stands at the mouth of the pass, and rakes it from head to foot: the air has witchcraft in it, and the scene a strange and supernatural potency that made me glad to feel myself in the common world again. Excellent ground for Glamis and his weird women, for the wild "all hail!" and the second, and the third, announcing in the hollow voice of unearthly augury the three steps to power and—perdition!

I hardly know why I said—"perhaps too celebrated," for few realities can surpass this in poetic dreariness; it was probably the new road, that does not answer to the call of the imagination or answers jarringly, that made me splenetic. It is an excellent post road, and winds round the base of the rocks most conveniently; but does not suit the character of the scene quite so well as a worse one, that formerly clambered up their sides.

But it is still wild enough for the most distorted fancy, and it was rather a relief to find oneself amidst the agreeable garden features that surround the village of Olioules. Looked back at the ghastly rocks and the eyeless fortress, which seemed to be coming after us; its walls are blank

and windowless, but it seems to see out of its skull like the awful statue of that Medicis,* whose mysterious aspect gives such an appalling expression of life to the stillness of marble. One impression is left on the mind by the view of this gorge,—that of having seen something which, though far from Greece and uncanonized by the memory of glorious deeds, cannot be traversed without a feeling that leads one back in thought to the sacred pass of Thermopylæ.

Toulon is pleasantly approached, but it does not spread out its peacock's tail like Marseilles; it seems a place of considerable movement and noisy as a rookery. The first impression which we received of its popular amusements, was in the shape of a *charivari:* for a moment we feared that it had been provoked by E——'s green bonnet,† but found that it was intended for a widow in the neighbourhood, who had married her cook. What a din! all the rabble in uproar: one might believe it a Saturnalia of galley-slaves just broken loose; bells, horns, rattles, trumpets, drums, cries, shouts,

* Michael Angelo's wonderful work, in the new sacristy (or Capella de' Principi) of the church of San Lorenzo at Florence.

† The rallying colour of the old dynasty.

groans, confounded together in a general roar, wide-mouthed and loud as thunder; then a long, deep, portentous hiss like the awakening of a nest of serpents, swelling again into a repetition of the roar, and then breaking up with a clamour of fierce and desperate discords, that seemed to have neither sound of human voice or instrument of man's invention in it.

At length "the hurly burly's done," the performers being, I suppose, exhausted, and we are permitted to sleep—if we can. This mode of expressing popular indignation towards an individual has something exceedingly fearful and savage in it: I should dread a charivari in the turbulent south, as I should the sound of a war-whoop in an American solitude.

A tempting show of fruit in the streets,—Pomona queens it beneficently in her kingdom of Provence; figs, grapes, almonds, oranges, bergamots, lemons, plums, citrons, olives, the healing jujube, and the pistachio of Aleppo,—with a hundred other of her foremost luxuries, are abundant. The pomegranate in its dark leaf and bright scarlet blossom is beautiful; but its produce may be ranked with Aladdin's vegetable jewellery: down-

right rubies to the eye, but to the taste, the most insipid of fruits, unless it be a medlar. Myrtles, oleanders, and other beautiful things, grow (we are told) wild on the sea-shore, but the climate is said to differ so in different parts, that fruits are gathered in one place while buds are knitting in another; and seed-time and harvest, instead of dividing the seasons into fixed periods, make a perpetual cycle.

CHAPTER XXII.

TOULON--THE DOCK-YARD—THE BAGNES—THEIR MORAL TENDENCY—TREATMENT—THE OUTCAST—POOR LIVING AND LYING—A DEARTH—VICIOUS CHILDREN—WOODEN FIGURES—GRIEF AND SHAME—WOMAN'S LOVE—A SUPERFLUOUS CEREMONY.

To-day we have seen the new port, the docks, the arsenal, and all that therein is: for this, it is necessary to have a permission, which is obtained immediately by applying to the British consul.

A more lively picture of ingenuity, skill, and manual labour, combining to produce the implements of power and the means of conquest, than the port exhibits even in this time of peace, cannot well be imagined. Several ships are on the stocks, and others, which have fought the fight and whose names are already historical, are laid up or going through repairs; while some, whose prows were hung with wreaths of victory, are, like the name in whose high fellowship those wreaths were gained, thrown by, cashiered,—forgotten!

One of our party, who had never seen any thing larger than a steam-packet, was delighted at the opportunity of mounting up into an eighty-gun ship, and examining all its details from stem to stern; wondering, questioning, and moralizing,—as all are disposed to do, even the most thoughtless, when the mighty machine, whose solitary path in the great waters had often been traced by the fancy, is for the first time brought substantially before them. The mind goes along with its destiny, its certain perils, its possible fate; and acknowledges, in the strong hand of Providence, the power which steers it through the horrors of the tempest, and suspends it in safety over the boiling and bottomless deep.

As we walked along, we passed several bands of galley-slaves employed at their daily tasks. Some, whose time of confinement was nearly expired, or whose conduct had been such as to merit indulgence, were suffered to go more at large than their deeper-dyed companions; and several came up to us offering straw boxes, toys of carved wood, and other trifles of their own workmanship for sale, with the most beseeching words and gesture. Their general dress consists of a loose scarlet

jacket, coarse trowsers, and a red cap; but there are a few who wear green ones with metal plates in them. These (our cicerone says) are the worst among the bad, and are thus marked as a punishment for some especial atrociousness. We observed that they were employed within the Bagne, and had the heaviest tasks assigned them, but none seemed over laboured; many stood about in groupes gossiping idly, others reposed in the shade, playing cards—the pack a mutilated one, with which a link-boy would scarcely have contaminated his finger and thumb. Famous Caravaggios: nothing wanting but the pale lamp and sullen back-ground.

Generally speaking, I never saw a more impenitent-looking crew. The fine blue sky, the flooding sunshine and bright waters, the sound of rapid oars, of thoughtless or of busy voices, the blowing air, and unimprisoned view, gave a character of gaiety, of almost freedom to the scene, very little in unison with our ideas of a place of punishment: and though a crowd of chained and branded wretches, cast out from the pale of society with the indelible mark upon them, presents a melancholy spectacle of human degradation, and fills

the mind with painful images of perversity and crime; yet to a person of that class of life, where the passions are usually uncontrouled by education, and the mind exposed to the dangers of evil contact, I should not think a view of the Bagne likely to be productive of much benefit as a moral lesson. Its horrors have been humanely mitigated, and there remains little to terrify a man of a coarse and hardened nature, feebly, if at all, liable to be shocked by an inflicted fellowship with vice, and who has not yet experienced the lowering effect of long years of imprisonment,—indeed who disbelieves in it. For few who have been sent to expiate crime by a life's bondage, imagine that the judgment will be fulfilled to the letter: a hardy rogue feels that hope is stronger than the sentence of the law, and counts on the resources of time, and the activity of chances. The vicious companionship of the Bagne perpetuates his love of vice, cheers him in his path of iniquity, and checks the tendency (should any exist) to reformation. He regrets his orgies, his *potage gras*, and the opportunities of wickedness for which he chiefly values freedom; but in the mean time he reflects that they wait for him, and that by and by he shall be

reinstated in all the advantages (suspended only for a time) which belong to his profession. In a Bagne " there are few tears, there are no blushes."

But for a being in whose mind, though partially corrupted, some sense of shame, perhaps some spark of virtue, may yet linger, this chaining two by two, this hideous companionship, is the real punishment: all the rest is nothing in comparison. What torture to be linked with one in whom vice has become habitual, and decent feeling extinct! It is like the misery which nature inflicts on those wretches, whom she sometimes (as if in cruel caprice) joins together. If one dies, the other is condemned to drag about the infected carcass until the principle of life is contaminated, and at length extinguished.

If a *forçat* has conducted himself from the period of his detention with unvarying propriety, he is allowed, as its termination approaches, a certain degree of freedom, released—at least by day, from his companion, and permitted to go about singly, and to employ a considerable part of his time for his own benefit. Some of the privileged have a very decent appearance, and though the chain be always round the leg, contrive to draw the trowser

over it, so as to conceal it entirely. A young man stood at the foot of the prison stairs with a table before him, full of small articles prettily carved in wood; something respectable in his manners and appearance interested us, and we inquired his story. It was a common one; he had been seduced into evil company, found guilty of having forged a signature, and condemned to the galleys for five years: the time was nearly expired, and in consequence of his uniformly good conduct, more than the common facilities were afforded to his industry, that he might be enabled to accumulate a small sum, and recommence life virtuously.

"But he can never return to his family or native place again," said our informer; "a known galley-slave can never hope to mix with other men as their equal."

And in these few words are contained the lasting sting, the enduring terror of the punishment, its power as a means of prevention, and perhaps the cause of its inefficiency as an instrument of reformation. The chain is broken, and the hold of the companion loosed; but the brand remains, and he who bears it about him finds the avenues to virtuous society closed against him, and his earnest

desire to become a member of the proud family of honourable men repulsed at every point. Even should the hand of individual philanthropy be held out to him; or should two or three, remembering the merciful precepts of the gospel and feeling that it is not because a man has sinned, that sin should necessarily be incarnate in his nature, make an entrance for him, the benefit, however consoling as a mark of that sympathy which the renewed heart seeks longingly, would still be too partial to be effective.

The true object of punishment should be reform. Justice, and the safety of the virtuous and peaceable portion of society, require its judicious infliction; but a punishment protracted to the end of life, continued in the midst of repentance, in the possession of liberty, impeding the one, blighting the other; the punishment, in short, of the brand, defeats the great moral end. A criminal restored to society, having within him the seeds,—perhaps the earnest desire of reformation, cannot efface it: in vain he changes his country and his name, in vain do time, and years, and casualties do their unfailing work; still the mark is there, burnt into the flesh, and he feels

that at any moment an accident may bring it to light. He knows himself an outcast, even should he not be taught that he is one by others; his life is a tissue of deceit and dread: fearing to risk society and unfit for solitude, the chances are that in despair he takes again to the early habits of vicious companionship, and grows a hater of the virtue which refuses to accept his atonement.

It is to the credit of the reigning authorities, as well as to the interior police of the Bagnes, that the horrible nuisances formerly complained of exist no longer; the passages are now clean and airy, and that part of the interior which strangers are permitted to visit, perfectly neat and well ventilated. I supposed at first that the dormitory, through which we were led, was a sort of show thing, like the display ward usually kept spruce for the inspection of strangers in a fashionably patronised hospital; but our guide, who seemed to have no interest in the matter, assured us that the whole prison was equally clean, which we were inclined to believe from the absence of all close and unhealthy odours, and the generally robust appearance of the prisoners, which, their thin diet considered, is really remarkable.

No meat is allowed, unless procured by what the men can gain in those few spare moments when they are permitted to work for themselves, or supplied by the kindness of friends whose attachment has outlived the disgrace of its object. The prison allowance for each man is thirty ounces of bread a-day, a scanty portion of vegetable soup made without meat, and of vegetables *qui ont battu la mer*, to use the cicerone's phrase, which means, I suppose, old pease and beans, and other stale sea-stores, and half a bottle of weak wine,—poor diet certainly for men who are at hard labour from half-past six in the morning till four in the afternoon, when they are driven in, take their slight dinner, and remain shut up till the next day. The task hours vary according to the season of the year. Before the prisoners are let out in the morning, they receive their portion of bread, which they may eat or reserve as they please: this is all they are allowed till the lean dinner comes, which closes the repasts for the day; their bed is an inclined plane, on which they lie jammed side by side, each on a thin strip of something called a mattress, but which appeared, as it lay rolled up on the top of the bench, not thicker than pasteboard. Each

man is allowed a rug with which to cover himself, but remains chained by night as by day.

There are at present in the Bagnes four thousand *forçats*; and five thousand workmen of the town and neighbourhood are daily employed in the port. We are told, that in the time of Napoleon the number of the former had amounted to nine, and the latter to nearly ten thousand persons; a proportion which, as far as it respects the galériens, is altogether at variance with the generally received and reasonable idea, that the crimes of the poor are often generated by the want of occupation. A diminution of one half of the number employed is the natural consequence of the long continuance of peace; but what have become of the idle hands? One turns round to look for them in the prison, and learns with surprise that the number of criminals has diminished in even a still greater proportion than that of labourers or mechanics.

We asked if there were any prisoners of note here, and were shown the man who had stolen the diamonds of Mademoiselle Mars, and who I suppose has acquired some sort of prison celebrity by the extent of the robbery. But our guide seemed

rather ashamed of bringing forward so ordinary a malefactor as a prominent feature, and appeared to regret that the more atrocious villains, who for the boldness and blackness of their crimes had been condemned for life, were no longer producible, having been recently, I think he said, transferred to Brest.

" Formerly (he added) we have had priests and notaries, and remarkable people in their way, such as the famous Count de Ste. Helene, and others, but now they send us nothing but common thieves, —no one in for more than twenty years;" and he looked complainingly, like one ill used and deprived of his just rights by an iniquitous stretch of authority.

Dangerous and desperate characters, or those who are suspected of meditating mutiny or evasion, are confined to the hulks; we did not go into them, but they were represented to us as much less clean than the prisons on shore, and fearfully hot in summer. Many of the criminals, or as they are called here, the condemned, (les condamnés,) are young boys,—two or three were indeed mere children in appearance. What a melancholy childhood! Nothing so revolting as a vicious child,—nothing so

pitiable, so to be pitied. The holy bloom of innocence (for is it not holy in its purity?) mildewed by the foul contagion, and no passion to goad, to uproot, to whirl every thing before it, no apology in crime for crime,—admitting that such attempt at palliation as the passions offer might go for something; but the mere gangrene of depravity, inoculated into the young life-blood by vile precept, or still more vile example.

Generally speaking, these culprits would puzzle Lavater, being a particularly harmless looking crew. A few had the close-knit brow of care, rather than of guilt, but I did not remark one positively nefarious visage; though of course there must be many among them inured to crime, and hardened in its exercise.

Last year a prisoner murdered his companion of the chain, and was guillotined within the Bagne a few hours after the deed was committed. Justice is administered by the commandant, or whatever else the title of the first in office may be, without reference to a higher power. Mutiny, and other offences involving imminent results, are punishable by death. If a forçat escapes, an instant pursuit commences; if taken within the

port, the reward is 25 francs; if in the town 50; if in the country 100: he is then double-ironed, imprisoned in a dungeon for a certain length of time, or the term for which he has been condemned extended to a longer period. Such at least is the statement of our conductor, to whom we are indebted for whatever information we have been able to obtain about the Bagnes.

Some figures in painted wood, clad in old armour like our grim warriors in the tower, decorate the arsenal. There is always, to me, something shocking in these painted effigies,—they seem so veritably, yet so unnaturally alive. A picture represents life, as a fine actor does the character which he adopts: we give ourselves up to the charm of the illusion, without forgetting that it is one: but in these images of man the look of life is so fearfully strong yet so unreal, that we fly from the horror that creeps over us, as we should from the approach of a spectre. I can imagine the passion of fear brought out, (as Miss Baillie has so finely done it by other means,)* increased, wrought up into almost frenzy, by the aspect of one of those figures in a lone gallery at twilight. The fixed

* In her powerful drama on the passion of Fear.

yet pursuing gaze, the suspended action, seeming every moment on the point of renewing itself, the imagined movement gaining on the rivetted gazer until he doubts whether it does not advance towards him, (a common illusion, to which we are often subject when the influence of fear is out of the question,)—all gaining upon the mind with the striding rapidity of terror, and reducing it to that state of weakness, when shadows are believed in and attested to as the deadly population of the grave.

I have said, that in a Bagne there are few tears —no blushes; but said it hastily, for I have seen both. As we were quitting the docks, an unfortunate man sat on a beam at the end of the Corderie, with a decent looking female beside him; both were sobbing bitterly: condemned for a first offence and only recently arrived, he had not yet been hardened into shamelessness. The boy to whom he was ironed had, perhaps from some natural feeling of pity or of delicacy, withdrawn himself as far from the wretched pair as the length of the chain would permit, leaving them to their sad communications,—and sad indeed they seemed. Shame is the homage which vice in its beginning

pays to virtue; and the proof that the principle of good is not yet extinct, though guilt wrestles with it and keeps it down. The prisoner covered his face with his hands as we passed, while the poor woman was too much absorbed in grief to be sensible of our approach. It was his sister, (our conductor said,) who had obtained permission to visit him for a few moments, adding, "It is the first time she has seen him in his prison-dress." Poor creatures! what a meeting of sorrow and of shame!—of shame even for the innocent. We gave the man a trifle, and when he would have thanked us, both burst into tears, and we could hear their sobs as we quitted the building.

Beautiful stories are told here of woman's love; of the fond hearts that come with their grief and their devotedness, watching and working for their guilty husbands, fathers, or sons; and waiting patiently till the day of freedom arrives, that it may not be also a day of loneliness for the freed, but that the voice of affection may help him to welcome it. How lovely is the image of virtue, purifying by its presence the abode of vice! How the soul reposes on its steady, unfearing, straight-

forward aspect, growing young again in such noble companionship!

When we returned to our inn, I asked a question of the waiter, which I had forgotten at the Bagne,—that was, whether the forçats who died there were interred within the precincts of the prison, or had a burying-ground allotted to them elsewhere? He replied gravely, that he had never heard of their being buried any where, and seemed to think it an unnecessary form. He knew that they had a chapel and a priest, a guillotine and an executioner; but as to their being buried, he had never heard of such a thing.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TOULON, CONTINUED—GREEKS—HEBREWS—MIXED RACE—NOVEMBER—HYERES—POSITION AND VIEW—PALMS—VILLA STULTZ—ORANGE GARDENS—MASSILLION—CLIMATE—FRUIT, FLOWERS, AND PRETTY WOMEN—COUNTRY TO CURRS—THE DEAR OLD YEARS—FREJUS—A LEGEND—THE PASS OF LESTRELLES—APPROACH TO CANNES—THE DRYAD'S TOMB—ORIENTAL CHARACTER OF THE SCENERY—CANNES.

Toulon is but a poor town, with narrow streets furnished with causeways, where the tradespeople sit and work, arrange their goods, or occupy themselves in any way they please; for I observe that the pedestrians prefer the middle of the street, and interfere but little with them. It has one handsome square, and several *places*, with trees and fountains, which in summer time must be invaluable: streets full of life, and an animated population, who buy, sell, wash, work, gossip, and seem, in short, to live out of doors. Every fountain, every thread of water that trickles through the streets, has its

group of washerwomen down upon their knees on the pavement; and the maritime and commercial movement which the port, dock yards, arsenal, &c. gives to the various trades and occupations dependent on them, greatly vivifies the general picture.

Fine quays, broad and airy; but no stir, except among a cluster of Jews canvassing rags, or speculating on ingots, it might have been either; some were squalid and degraded-looking, the glory of Israel "shone no more at all in them;" but two, who overtopped the rest, had the fine melancholy cast of head which, outliving ages of bondage, is still sometimes found amongst the remnant of this antique people. Some lazy Greeks drawled slowly in and out of their bark, with an air of solemnity which one could have wished, for the sake of this bright name, had had less of stupidity in it. A boy with a straight nose, making one line with his forehead, and underground eyes that looked as if the shading round them made part of themselves, had something delicate and ideal about him: the rest seemed dull and dogged.

Women here remarkably pale, but often pretty, with fine eyes,—the common beauty of the south. The mixed race more in evidence than even at Mar-

seilles; Spanish, Italian, and even Indian and Egyptian physiognomies mixing with, and sometimes almost effacing the French character,—so at least it seemed to us. I speak always of the working class, the only one which presents itself prominently to the rapid glance of a passing stranger.

To-day we enter what in England is called the gloomy month of November, but it comes like Guido's Aurora. The plane trees opposite to our windows are as full and verdant as they could have been in the month of June, and though it is not yet seven o'clock, the washer-women are already hard at work at the neighbouring fountain,—a ball-supper fountain fringed with aquatic plants, through which the water is gently filtered, every leaf serving as a tube from whose point a clear drop falls incessantly. Perfumed water, gold fish, and reduced dimensions, and a prettier *trionfo* for the court supper-table of old Carlton-house, could not be well imagined.

Would go to Hyères, which was somehow or other confounded in my fancy with paradise, and so lost my illusions. H—— imagined it another Terracina, with the lonely strand and something like the old Volscian town above it, standing out

amidst palm trees; and I had placed it on a pebbly shore, set round a sparkling bay, and swelling upwards into an amphitheatre hung with rich and bloomy gardens. But it is a league from the sea, and the intervening plains round which itself and its hills make a sweep, look (though perhaps they may not actually be so) as flat as a billiard-table.

The upper, or old town, is steep and dirty; we mounted up to the church, and from thence looked down upon the modern Hyères, the harbour, the encircling hills, and the opposite islands. The view merited a better light than that in which we saw it; but I thought the town itself, and the garden-houses, which are profusely scattered about, had a melancholy character, not altogether owing to the absence of sunshine. The sea is too much blocked out by the islands to preserve much either of expanse or dignity: the gardens are walled in, and crowded with orange trees: we looked about for the palms which travellers have seen covering the plains, but could not find them; but afterwards discovered four or five in a garden in the town, and recollected that we had remarked about as many more in another as we entered it. There are, as

usual, vines and mulberries, and pomegranates straggling in the hedges; but the palms, from our point of view at least, "have this extent—no more."

The upper, or old town of Hyères, is left to the people; but the houses in the lower, with their garden supplements, are chiefly let out in lodgings, or singly to strangers who are sent here for the benefit of a divine climate, that knows nothing about the fatal mistral, which neutralizes the effect of nature's bounty, as far as relates to its influence on an impaired constitution, in almost every part of the sea-coast country of Provence. Montpellier, Marseilles, Toulon and all the intermediate towns, are more or less subject to its power; but Hyères has found out a sunny haven sheltered from the *bise* of the north-west, and open to every soft and southern influence. It is now supposed to be one of the most successful climates in consumptive cases; less variable than Nice, and almost as serenely beautiful as Barcelona. A new name on the healing list, but placed by many eminent opinions in the same rank with that of the island of Madeira.

Nature apart, the most picturesque thing at Hyères is the girdle of ruined towers running

round the green hill that rises up behind the town with an air of ineffectual protection. But the finest is the villa of Mr. Stultz, Baron of something—I have forgotten what, (but *dearer* to English ears under the old familiar appellation,) who resides here, and passes for having—perhaps really has—some twenty or thirty thousand a-year. An intelligent little boy, who acted as our guide, evidently looked upon him as the first of men; he had three fine carriages, he said, and six fine horses, and a saloon! "all the same as in a palace," the bare mention of which seemed to fill him with awe. We were content to take his fair report, and a view of the exterior,—a gay exterior, painted all over, after the southern fashion, with a crowd of red and yellow pilasters and arabesques, and a crowning belvidere, party-coloured like the rest of the building, with a gallant ship on the top of it. Our boy had no higher idea of splendour; it was to him what the tinsel robe of the miraculous image is to the poor nun who has never been beyond the walls of her convent.

Walked in a garden attached to a large house, let (I believe) in apartments, where we saw the palm tree, banana, guava, sugar-cane, bamboo,

odoriferous lemon, and a multiplicity of rare and delicate plants flourishing in the open air. Orange-gardens of great extent,—superb trees laden with fruit, and amongst them a particular species of the bigarron, said to be curious, and various plants familiar to our green-houses in a dwindled shape, but that have here the strength and size of shrubs.

The plains of Hyères might pass on a poetical fancy for the garden of the Hesperides, all vegetable gold—or will be soon, for the oranges, though large, are not yet quite ripe. But these orange-gardens, like the olive-groves and vineyards, sound better than they look; formally planted in dumpy rows and enclosed within stone walls, they appear, at a little distance and when seen from a height, like nursery-grounds; and sometimes like over-peopled grave-yards, which the vying hands of posthumous affection had crowded with green memorials. Hyères is the native place of Massillon, that great prelate whose pulpit eloquence made a mighty monarch look into himself. "Father, (said Louis XIV. to him,) when I hear other preachers, I am pleased with them; but when I hear you, I am displeased with myself."

When people talk of Hyères as a place for invalids, they usually say, "the island of Hyères;" but the island or islands—for there are three which from their close vicinity may be said to belong to it, are uninhabited,—perhaps uninhabitable, though there is something like a fort on one of them. The town has some trade in oil, wine, and oranges, and its beautiful flowers are sent to Marseilles and Toulon; it is probably a sweet winter place, and indeed looks as if it could not have any thing to do with that ungentle season; but whether it was the gloomy day, or the gloomy associations which belong to a spot where so many come to die,—even though others may find healing in it, or whether it was both put together that sicklied it over, I know not; but there was a shade of something deeper than melancholy on it that dimmed its beauty,—at least we thought so.

Fruit and flowers seem to be all and every thing at Hyères; if you ask what is to be seen, you are told, fruit and flowers,—that is, orange-gardens and rare plants; if you inquire in what the trade of the place consists, you are answered, in fruit and flowers; and if you look about, the eye every where rests on fruit and flowers.

Saw some pretty women at Hyères, and a beauty on the road with the velvet eyes that one often meets with in the south, and which, if one may venture to say a thing so fanciful, seem to feed by their rich warmth the amazing eyelashes that soften their lustre. A pleasant country from Toulon to Hyères: returned by a yellow sunset, with a streaking of iron-coloured clouds which set it off prodigiously. Gardens enriched by a variety of trees, which make beauty if they do not find it; and on an isolated hill the ruins of a fort, or what looks like one, with a fine purple mountain going to sleep behind it. Kitchen-gardens in beautiful order, watched and dressed like flower-knots: the *potager* seems a chief care in the south of France; yet at the hotels fruit and vegetables are often sparingly served, and not always of the best quality, with the exception however of figs and olives, which are sure to be excellent. At dessert, the grapes are frequently of a poor flavour and unripe, though sold so cheap, that we have bought, at Montpellier and other places, more than five persons could eat for five sous, and of a most delicious quality. But a dinner, always excellent and varied with considerable skill, is sure to put the hungry

traveller in such good humour, that the meagre dessert is rarely growled at. All wines may be commanded, but the common wine (*vin ordinaire*) of the south is excellent.

Proportions considered, there are almost as many bastides at Toulon as at Marseilles, and a few Italian porches with the slight piasters supporting the roof of vines, but not enough to make a feature, or indeed to be remarked. We left the busy town early, passing through Valette, a stirring looking place, and admiring the gracefully irregular surface of the country and the hills—not verdant, but coated with an enamel of their own, in which I find considerable beauty.

Met a river at Sollies, with fresh trees about it: it was a pleasant sight and we hailed it joyfully, which showed that we had seen nothing but the dry bed of one for some time. As the road ascends, the ground beneath looks like a vast garden, walled in by irregular hills: this is very much the general aspect of the country, the wall is nearer or more distant—it is rocky, fantastically indented, or covered with pines; there is a village boldly perched upon a hill, or hitched against it—perhaps a ruin; the garden surface is flatter or

more varied, as it may happen, but the same character always predominates.

Still garden culture; much field-work done by the spade, and of hoeing and dibbling by the women. At length we find the olive spreading out into something like a tree; those which are removed from the dust of the road have a deep green hue that mixes well with the golden vine, but we have fewer vines now, and sometimes grass fields and dear homely features mixing with foreign ones. A regular hedge of pomegranates near to Cuers,—and a fête at it; women praying in the churches, and men gossiping in the streets. Holiday gaiety in France is of a quiet cast; it consists in grave talk and graver dancing. The French are a cheerful people, easily amused but not exuberant, except perhaps in speech—I do not mean *professions*, for there we do them great injustice; they are decorous in their enjoyments, but suit the feeling to the word more aptly perhaps than others whose mirth is of a more undrest kind.

Beautiful hills as we advance, and deliciously coloured: pomegranates again growing wild in the banks, and daisies sown into the grass with a May-

day profusion. For some time past the hedges have had an exotic look, but I know too little of botany to distinguish any thing through the ten-fold coat of dust that encrusts every leaf, except my old friend the unexotic blackberry. But here again are the dear grass fields, and pear and cherry trees: the lemon and pomegranate, the fig and olive with which they mix, speak of distance; but a pear or a cherry tree brings the orchard or the homestead, the village stile and the hawthorn bush, full before us; and with them such sweet thoughts of home and gleamings of its fair domestic scenery, that we almost scent the perfume of the flowers which we have gathered in its fields when our old years were new. O for those dear old years! Many a time has a tuft of violets in a road-side hedge, a smell of weeds burning, the crowing of a cock, the hammering of a village-joiner, the fire-light gleaming through the cottage casement or the open door at evening,—even the slow creeking of the labouring cart-wheel brought you bounding back again to knock at my heart, and find it jumping out to meet you at the first pressure of the spring, like the gilt lady in a Dutch clock-case.

Passed Carnoules, Luc, Vidauban, to Muy, where we arrived at nightfall, and found comfortable beds. I can never judge of any thing at sunset hour, or the charming moments that precede it, when the last beams raying out over the tops of the mountain, hill, or forest behind which it is sinking, act like magic on the scene. Then the brown earth becomes imbued with a softer and deeper brown, the green leaves grow purer and more transparent, the distant uplands seem of a richer and more ingrained purple; it might perhaps be owing to this same magic, but the country about Luc, and onward to Muy, seemed to me all pleasantness. Agreeable about Muy; frequent streams, and trees more varied and vigorous than usual: the olive, so long first fiddle, drops gradually into an accompaniment; magnificent alders as we advance towards Fréjus, and the ruins of an amphitheatre just at its entrance. This Fréjus, the birth-place of Julius Agricola, and which belongs to modern history by the disembarkation of Napoleon after his Egyptian eclipse;* and again

* Fréjus, though the spot always named, was not the actual one; but the little port of St. Raphael, half a league distant.

by its being the spot from which, in another page of his eventful history, he sailed for Elba, has still some records of its Roman masters. Besides the amphitheatre, there are the fragments of an aqueduct and the remains of a temple scattered over its fields and gardens, giving it an antique appearance, greatly helped out by the stately character and durable verdure of the marine pine. It is the tree for ruins; we may fancy it coeval with them,—it belongs to the past, the present, and the future, and seems to stand by bearing witness to the splendour of which it has partaken, and whose remains are still decorated by its monumental beauty.

Certain chroniclers, who deal in the marvellous, make mention of a church on a summit of a mountain, not a great way from Fréjus and near to Catignac, as happy in the possession of a remarkable picture, which may, or may not, be there still, for any thing I know, not having made the pilgrimage.

I have said a picture; but the story that hangs upon it is the point. Louis the Thirteenth having been married three-and-twenty years, and being still childless, began to despair. So did not a cer-

tain barefooted friar, who so beset the Virgin with supplications, giving her no rest night or day, that she at last, probably to get rid of the importunities of the eternal Fiacre, (for so he was named,) appeared to him, and having ordained that the queen should perform a certain number of *neuvaines* in her honour, granted his petition; and to prove that he was not under the influence of an illusion, manifested herself to him under the same form in which she was (and perhaps may be still) represented in the church of Nôtre Dame des Graces, being the same church on the top of the mountain of which I have already spoken.

The holy Fiacre fled off to verify, and finding the likeness exact, bore witness before the mighties, prophesying boldly (as well he might) the birth of the *grand monarque*, which memorable event took place in the course of the ensuing year.

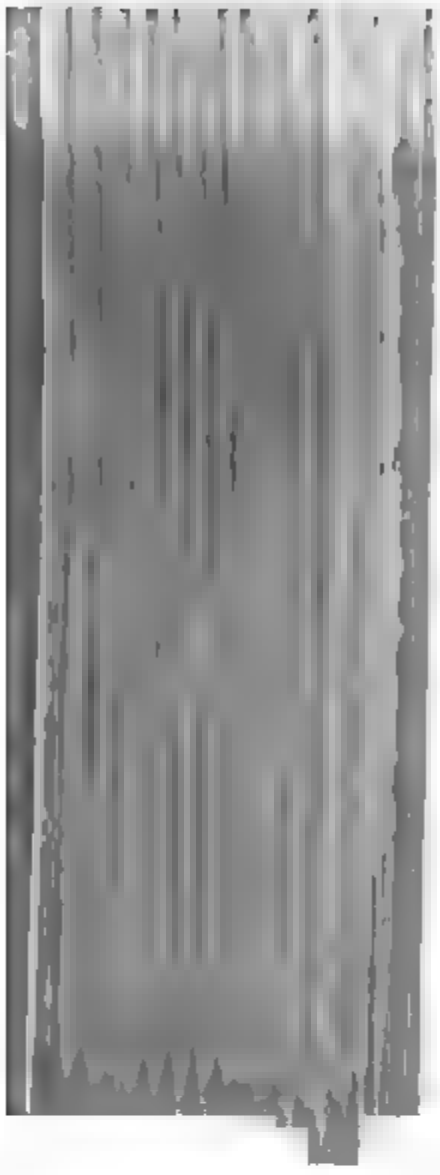
Whilst I have been telling my story, my wealth of pines has been gradually giving way to groves of cork trees, that come with their Spanish associations, and their ilex colouring and form spreading darkly over the hills. Every branch has a page of some roving life hung upon it, and one cannot look at it without thinking of the wine-skin and

the wallet, the cheese-crusts and more savoury though half-demolished pasty, which we have seen—with our eyes of romance, devoured under its shade.

The pass of Lestrelles is the loveliest of mountain passes,—magnificent is the word in general, or sublime, or awful, but this is lovely; such sylvan views over the mountains and the sea, with fine stretches of wood, and a fore-ground like a botanic garden run wild. The rocks are covered with the arbutus, now in the perfection of its flower and fruit; its pure and delicate blossoms, like small bells of virgin wax, hang on the same branch with its rich scarlet and bright amber berries, almost effacing by their prodigal beauty the innumerable tribes of graceful and aromatic plants, that cover the earth as if they were mere butter-cups and daisies; we have the carriage filled with them, and Colville's green-houses in the month of May are not more redolent than our November bouquets. What delight to pass on such a day through such a country, the eye roving over mountains that rise up tier above tier till they dissolve into the heavens, the balmy atmosphere, the pure sky and rich details,—sometimes the sea, always the mountains. What religion is in such a

picture—what a voice in its solitude! If the soul be not purified by the contemplation of such scenes, it is not because the characters in which their great origin is written are faint and doubtful; the mighty name covers them from the sky down to their roots in the earth, and he who will not read must shut his eyes upon it. The road is excellent, it winds in a fine terrace round the hills: game abounds,—I mean of the gentler kind, but both wild boars and wolves find a retreat in the farther depths of the forest.

So did robbers formerly; but a band, posted in ambush to attack the carriage of some Italian prince, was surprised and taken; and since then, travellers have passed in safety. At length, our terrace descends gently amidst cork trees, and dark hills that open as if to let in gleams of mountains faintly crayoned on the sky: towards the post-house of Lestrelle, the hills have a more inhabited character; here the sea opens with the port and town of Cannes, three posts distant, glittering in the sunbeams. Stopped to change horses at a solitary house in a romantic situation, with three or four fine elms before the door; a quiet pretty spot, but with something of a smuggling



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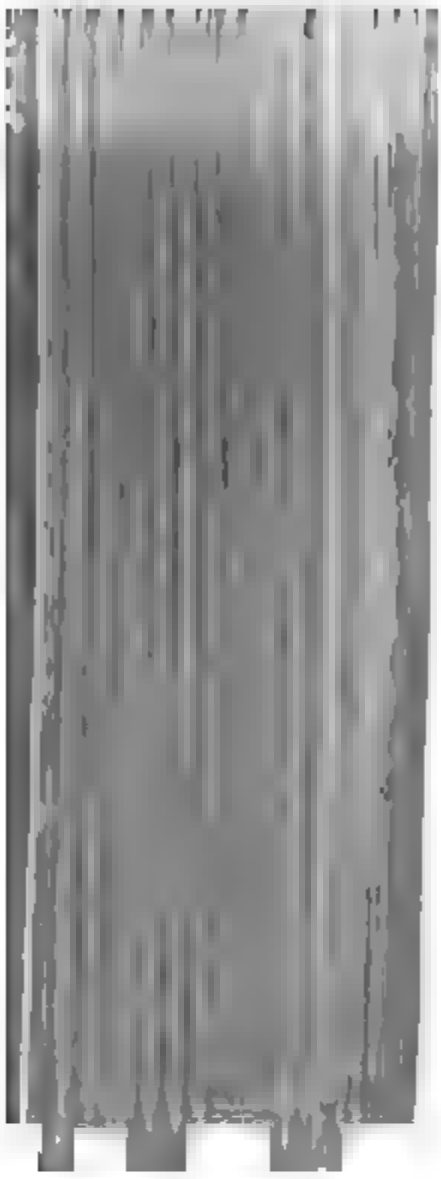
tions are at once majestic and melancholy: were I obliged to name a single object which might image solitude, power, and fate,—the desert, the sceptre, and the tomb, I think I should choose one of those uncompanionable, lofty, and monumental trees. There is a knoll at a short distance from Cannes, an island-looking thing, stranded there perhaps in sport, on some forgotten day when the waves were in a frolic mood; it might be bound round with a ribbon, yet its compactness has nothing formal in it, but on the contrary a beautiful poetic flow. A group of the most graceful pines that I have ever seen grow on it, their swelling lines are broken by the pyramidal tops of a few tall cypress, amongst which some other trees of summer leaf and loveliness have crept in, as if by chance. In Pagan times, it would have passed for the tomb of a Dryad; and Poussin, had he journeyed this way, would have stolen it for his Arcadia. Nearer to Cannes these trees again appear, forming a natural grove along a sandy shore,—a lonely shore without a living thing upon it; the trees stand apart as if they would shun each other, and the sun pours its descending rays through the bare trunks slantingly. Beneath their spreading heads appear the

sea; and the islands of St. Marguerite and St. Honorat—lonely-looking now, but which once swarmed with monks as a hive does with bees, seem to float on its surface.

There is something very oriental in the scenery of this part of Provence. I cannot look at this desert strand without thinking of some old long-ago story of the pirate island or the lonely bark, and going over again in thought all those fond sad tales of Turkish girls and Moorish maidens,—Zaides and Zoraymas, which hold their influence over minds, tenacious like my own of early fancies, much longer than perhaps in decency they ought to do. Aloes begin to show themselves here; they are the first that we have seen, or at least remarked; I cannot however say, that they may not have a more northern existence. In running along a road, many things escape the eye which looks one way, while the very thing it seeks for happens to be on the other. No plant gives a more foreign aspect to a landscape than the aloe; its pale unusual green, and large sword-like leaf—so different from the tender verdure and flexible foliage of our perennial plants, assign it to another sun and more enduring nature than we are blessed with.

Just in time to seize upon a small apartment in an hotel close to the sea; an hour later and we should have been consigned to the hay-loft, or obliged to jog on in the dark to Antibes. And now we are making ourselves comfortable, which we always contrive to do wherever we are, and shall here, I have no doubt, in spite of the quarantine.



CANNES—THE MIST
OF ST. MARGUER
THE PAYROLADE—
BATH OF THE
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NOVEMBER 3rd.

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immense quantities for exportation, but figs are the chief article of commerce: large cargoes are sent to Languedoc, and to many of the Mediterranean ports of the south of France. The hills about Cannes are warmly wooded, the olives of a superb growth, and the buildings scattered amongst them very white and villa-like at a distance, though probably only barns, or rough farm-houses at best.

4th. Sea dark and billowy, with a touch of the mistral. The vessels in port, seeing it gathering in the distance, sailed out just in time to take shelter in a safe nook of La Marguerite, as the sailors familiarly call the saint or her island; and now it comes booming over the waves, while they make sea-horses, and lash with manes and tails against the shore,—not like the mild and tideless Mediterranean, but like the fierce ocean itself. Quite a Brighton day, when the casements are blown in, and showers of spray driven in after them.

At this moment a ship passes, cutting its way through the waves, and leaving a line of foam behind it; like the leviathan in the book of Job, "he maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary." What a splendid image! there is no talking of little things after it.

Last April the mistral came suddenly without sound of preparatory shell, and dashed eight vessels against the shore, where they all went to pieces. It was within port: many perished, and in sight of their wives, parents, and children, who stood by and could give no help. What a sight! how many deaths were in it for the survivors!

A ship founders at sea: we have friends in it; the news reaches us slowly, but at length it comes. It is before us,—the fierce night, or the still more ghastly morning; we see the lifting up of the waves till they make one with the heavens; we hear the death shriek, and see the shrinking back of nature from the deep and dismal tomb; but the time for help is gone by, and even while imagination broods over those living horrors, reason feels that the suffering has long been over, and the dead at rest. Thus bringing us a melancholy consolation, almost without our knowing from whence it is derived.

But the actual sight! the moment between life and death, when a rope, a plank, a hand might save—to see it all,—and yet feel that you are powerless,—O Lord, how horrible!

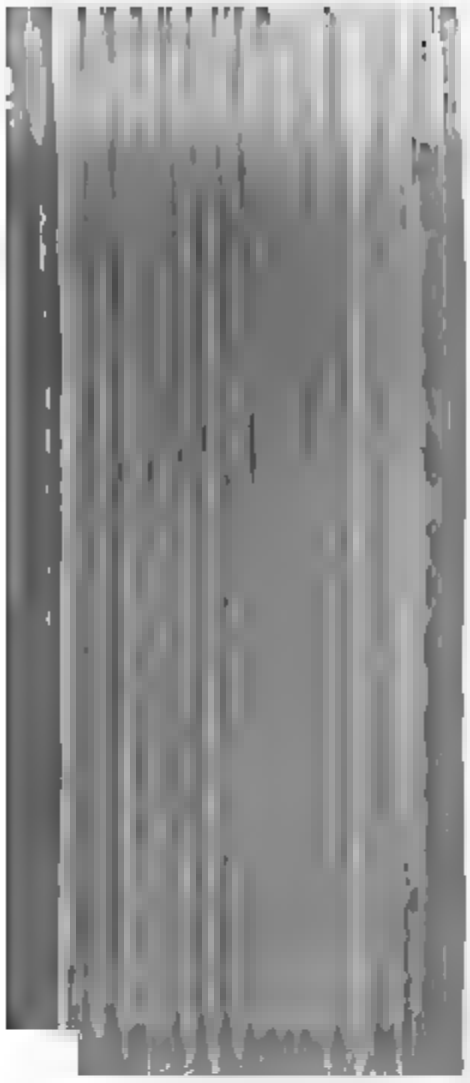
Formerly I used to think of the man in the iron

mask as of something gentlemanlike and romantic, something in fine linen and point ruffles, with a kind of net-work vizor, and a melancholy indescribable eye gleaming through it. But since I have seen Lockroy rivetted up at the Odéon, the miserable real wretch has possessed himself of my imagination, and stands bolt upright before me whenever I turn my eyes towards his island prison, that melancholy memorial with the hideous history of despotism trampling down individual liberty storied on it. The island of St. Marguerite is opposite to our windows, and at no great distance from shore: had the weather been favourable, we should have gone over and looked at it, but squalls make some sick and frighten others, and we have had nothing else for the last two or three days The civilities which pass between Macbeth's witches would be superfluous at Cannes;

> "I'll give thee a wind
> That is kind;
> And I another."

Here every one may have a wind without asking for it.

This is a sweet place even now, and in a softer season, when the leaves are all out, must be a sort



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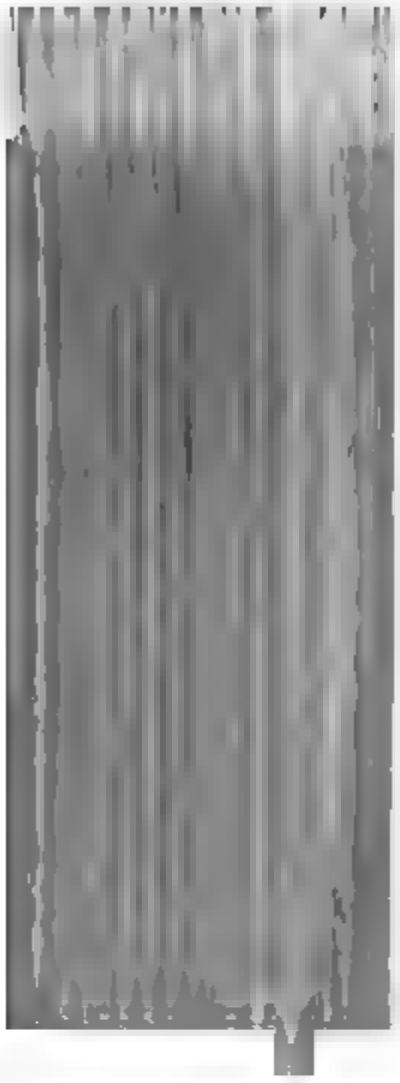
wears the uniform of the national guard; or a Victoire, whose *chacun* is still in embryo, pinched into a bonnet, the reduced duplicate of her mother's. But the country folks have other modes; and while the girls gather together in one corner, the males congregate in another. All the men here are, or look like sailors or fishermen; "laouse la mar, ten-ti à terro,"—praise the sea, stick to the earth, is an old Provençale proverb, to which they seem to give but a half hearing. Even the children, boys and girls, spend the greatest part of their time knee-deep in the sea, and the rest shell-gathering in the sands. The people of Cannes seem to doat on their little town, and its belongings; some girls, a score at least, who thronged round us this afternoon as we sat by the road side, appeared to consider our praise of it as a matter of course, and to be as well convinced that it was of all earth's spots the fairest, as the Moors were that paradise was in that part of the heavens immediately over Granada. Two of the gayest had been to Marseilles, and with kind relations too; but its crowds and gaieties sorrowed their hearts, and after three months, they returned again to the fishing-boats and fisher-boys of their beloved Cannes.



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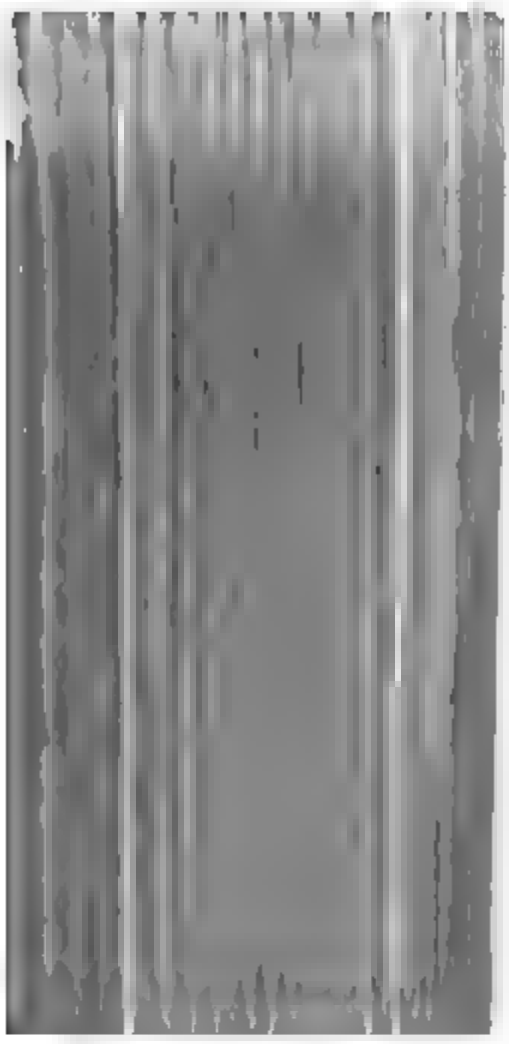
in early days, I have sat listening to the songs of the cockle-gatherers, keeping time to the blythe measure of their oars, as they pushed into the sea-shore creek where their huts were nestled, or glided along with the silver line that lay glittering on the waters, making rough music that still had charm in it when young voices took the lead; and the fisher-girls made the air ring with the brisk couplet that often, in the full tide of its joyousness, sunk as if it could not help it into that plaintive movement, which may be called the natural melody of their land. I was a dreamer then; and when I have watched those boats passing between me and the lady-moon, what things I have thought! what visions my cockle-gatherers have become! They were no longer the real fishermen and maidens, but the reflections of my own mind, and as full of illusions as that mind was then.—Alas!

Which alas! puts me in mind of a story told me to-day of a baby fifteen months old, whose country nurse, wishing to bring her to reason after a little fit of *espièglerie*, told her that when she went home to her Paris mamma, she would be punished for such things; upon which she crossed



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beautiful and affecting attributes, and substitute conventional forms for that heart-felt piety which converts every thought into praise. The true heart's incense is the involuntary prayer, thankful for the breath of heaven, thankful for the day of rest, thankful above all for the great promise,—the death from which comes life; and though it is good to pray "where two or three are gathered together," yet is not the whole sabbath a prayer and a thanksgiving to him who, having closed the door of his silent dwelling which for six days had echoed to the voice of labour, goes out into the fields, and hears the hymn of birds, and breathes the breath of flowers, and sees the vapour purpling on the hills and the bright sun in the heavens, and thinks of Him who made them all, that we might love Him in his works, and seeing them, rejoice and be glad?

To-day is Sunday, and the very birds tell us so, at least I can almost fancy it; they sing as if they believed it summer, helping out the rich chorus of nature, in which we find the first principles of harmony, the fusion of various and (as it would seem) opposing sounds into one full accord. In this general blend the noise of waters, the whistling

winds, the carol of the lark, the cry of the curlew, the grating of the crow, the song of the nightingale, and the thousand other sounds that fill the air, fall into each other and form a liquid swell of perfect harmony, produced by the nice adjustment of unisons and discords.

As we roved about in the vineyards by the road side, a woman came towards us, holding a small basket of the sweet, but too powerfully scented blossoms of the cassia. She offered them to us pressingly, and then would insist on our visiting her bastide, that looked down upon us from an upper vineyard. The view from its terrace we found enchanting; it takes in the embayed shore, the yellow strand with the tall pines upon it, that talked romance to me when I first saw them, and many other sweet and beautiful things; but the most beautiful are the rocks that run out into the sea sheltering the rest, and when the sun sinks behind their illuminated ridge, look like a thin screen, through which the light seems bursting. There is no describing these sunsets, nor the broken outline of these magnificent rocks with the dying lights upon them. I often stand to watch their last glow, or their preceding brightness, when

the cloud-palaces of heaven are all glory, and then turn homewards, thanking the gentle November day that allows me to do so; for now that our spell of mistral is over, the wind speaks in whispers, and the sky in the true sun-beams of Provence.

"The French have no idea of comfort," say the English, and adduce as a proof the want of a word in their language which expresses it. This reasoning is not, however, conclusive; for instance, we have no word to express *ennui*, yet are strongly suspected of being intimately acquainted with its meaning. But certainly, whatever all-over carpets, improved doors that shut tightly, rectified chimneys, luxurious chairs, and the best beds in the world may do for Paris and the provincial capitals, still the humbler habitations continue frequently to exhibit that utter nakedness, which indicates a positive unacquaintance with the meaning of our comfortable word comfort.

I do not speak of luxuries; whatever this or former ages have produced, whatever taste has sanctioned—of rare, costly, or splendid, has contributed, while its mode held, to the embellishment of the rich saloon, or the luxurious boudoir: all

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saw no deficiency, neither did her father,—a kind old man whom we met in the vineyards; yet they were decent people, apparently in easy circumstances, and seemed to know the value of their beautiful situation, of which a little attention to neatness and ordinary comfort would have made a paradise.

Only one palm-tree here that I have seen, and that looks sick and has its head bound up; but abundance of aloes, making family parties in the hollows of the rocks. Delightful views every where —from church, strand, hills; quite a Paul and Virginia country, as we say, a Tommy and Harry story. I have talked of one palm tree, and have just been told that they are numerous; to prove which our hostess has taken me into her garden, where there are two, one about three feet high, and the other about twice as many inches. Children, probably, of the aforesaid sick mother, but puny ones, though she called them beautiful, and ran on about their fine promise, as if they were of the very best growth of Lebanon.

By the by, that growth was of cedars. As to the palms, if they are easily propagated, one year's truth may be the next year's story. Corinne saw

but one palm at Rome, that fair and lonely tree in the garden of the Capucin convent; there was another, however, in the Prieuré de Malte which she did not see, neither did I, but always believed in the single blessedness of that beautiful tree until lately. Perhaps the palms of Hyères may be hidden in the grass, and while I talk doubtingly of their existence may be growing up step by step into stateliness, as if purposely to convict me of injustice or stupidity.

Another Brighton day, but of a different kind; an evening in the beginning of September, when the shrimpers are out scraping against the rocks, crossing the sunbeams waist-deep in the waters, and wading on with their long poles like sea witches. We have had a little rain, the first that has fallen for eight months, and the people are all out in the fields rejoicing and making the most of this rare blessing. The country is all perfume, which word makes me think of Grasse, a small town two leagues off in the hills, that sends its sweets, and used to send its dressing-boxes lined with bergamot, all over Europe: those who prefer a street to the sea-shore may, if they please, perform quarantine amongst its hard and soft pома-

tums, and many do so, and are (I think) wrong; for what is extrait de mousseline, verveine, or réséda, compared with the bright sea-shore and the rocks with the last sunbeam on them? Besides, we live like Neptune, and grow nice amongst the big and little fishes, despising tunny and making little of John Dory, which would have lured John Quin to the Land's End. Along the line of coast from Toulon to the Golfe de Juan, we find land-marks which indicate some of the chief points in the story of the most extraordinary man of this, or almost any other age. At Toulon, Napoleon Buonaparte started for his great career: at Fréjus he landed from Egypt, and from thence pressed forwards to a throne: there also did he embark for Elba, after having abdicated his right to its possession; and here, and for the last time, did he again land in France, in the lonely Golfe de Juan, from whence he passed on to downfal as he had done before to glory.

The mightiest of the mighty did not disembark here, as has been generally thought, but in the Golfe de Juan, about a league distant. That night there were no stars in the heavens; the sky was dark and ominous, as if the after story of the battle-field, and the lonely rock, was written on it.

He did not enter a house, but reposed before a large fire kindled on the strand, or strode up and down along the shore. His presence caused no sensation; the people recognised him and were silent—whether from the presence of fear, or the absence of affection, we could not learn.

The inhabitants of Cannes are reputed peaceful; in all the horrors of the old revolution they toiled on, and remained quiet. What a blessing of a bay! to have preserved itself, like a pearl in an oyster-shell, in the midst of such a troubled ocean, —thinking of its figs and oranges, its fresh anchovies and pickled tunny, when the war-whoop resounded through the land, and people played at human life as children do at push-pin.

After which pithy reflexion I strolled out, rather in love with the people, and very much with the afternoon. There was a light in the heavens that opened every pore of the heart, and the small waves made such a sweet tale-telling, gossiping noise, as if every one had a sea story in it; the leaves too whispered, but the hills were silent. Mountains have no voices, and yet they cry aloud, and the heart hears them. How mysterious and how beautiful in its mystery is nature!

These are low mountains—summer ones, and

green; full no doubt of the hum of insect life, the carol of birds, the ravishing harmonies of nature, and sometimes of the voice of man. But in the deep solitudes of the higher regions how stupendous is the silence—and the sound, should any come, how awful! It is no common sound that breaks the dead stillness,—it is no sound of life; but some shock of nature, some giant that unloosens itself from the earth and falls headlong, some avalanche, which the passing breeze disengages from its hold and hurls forward; or it may be the voices of the heavens, the sweeping wind, or the grand and desolate thunder. How the mind works in such scenes, how it almost bursts with the thousand thoughts, the thousand emotions, that vanish if you try to arrest them; deep and soul-stirring, yet vague and fugitive as vapour,—like that they expand and fill up every crevice; but they refuse subserviency, and the moment the hand tries to note down what is present in the thought, all vanishes,—the chain is broken, the links scattered; the general sentiment alone remains, and the impressions, of which it was a moment before so full, are lost in the effort to retrace them.

Looked once more towards my pines of the lonely strand,—my seraglio garden;—I say *my*, for I am sure that no one ever loved them as I do; and then gathered a handfull of garden mignionette,—garden as far as look went, but a weed here, and scentless.

The south of France abounds in hermitages, many of the *baumes** are tenanted by holy men, who have still their followers. At Muy the landlady of the inn urged us to stay a day longer, that we might visit the hermit of the hills; a pious anchoret, who lives (according to her account) caved up something like La Fontaine's rat, who made himself a cell in a Dutch cheese:

> " La solitude était profonde
> S'étendant partout à la ronde;"

but we backed out of the scrape. Here the hermit came to visit us; but he was a mere beggar, who filled his wallet with scraps, and did not even affect the venerable.

Most people are satisfied with their proportion of talents, few with their social position; how often do we hear fortune abused, how seldom nature. I have been just now gossiping with a

* Caverns, or grottoes.

man—evidently a very stupid, if not silly one, who observed, speaking of Napoleon, that he could have set him right in many of his notions, if he had been near him. This man, who was a small tradesman of the town, seemed rather ashamed of his station, and broadly intimated that fortune had not played him fair.

CHAPTER XXV.

CANNES TO ANTIBES—ANTIBES—ST. LAURENT—PASSPORT AND TONGS—HATS AND SPORTSMEN—NICE—CLIMATE—ILLUSIONS—THE OLIVE—CLIMATE AGAIN AND PEOPLE—ITALY AND NO ITALY — FAIRY BELLS — SKETCH OF NICE—OPERA—THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEMPER—DRIVES—WINTER VERDURE—THE FOREIGN GRAVE.

At length our eight days' quarantine is over; and though I say *at length*, I really feel a sort of regret at quitting this beautiful place, which I began by admiring, but now love. This is a country that awakens feelings kindred to its own beauty; that has something not only lovely, but loving, in it; that salutes you with gentle cheerfulness, and works into your heart with its foreign stories of sea and land, and its home sweetness; changing the hasty and sometimes cold feeling of admiration into the warmer one of sympathy,—sympathy more slow to awaken, but when roused, so tender and intense. It will not always come when we desire it; but when it does, how the bare earth

brightens into beauty, and the silent heart how it finds notes,—and sweet ones for its instinctive harmonies. Sympathy is love; examine love under any other influence, and you will find it an imperfect feeling. The passion of love, the love of nature, of the arts, of all that is good, great, or beautiful, is sympathy, and cannot be heart-felt unless it be so.

A continued garden to Antibes, (the ancient Antipolis,) and a charming one; vines, figs, oranges, almonds, pomegranates, (what a dessert enumeration) mixed up with myrtles, heaths, and a profusion of beautiful green things; with fine-marking walnut-trees, and superb olives stretching along the sea side, and following the curvings of its gracefully embayed shore. The mountains at a little distance are covered with snow, but here the air is all warmth and softness. Antibes seems a poor place, but agreeably put down, though not so delightfully surrounded as Cannes: it is said to be well fortified, and to possess some Roman remains. While we changed horses, a very fine young woman passed us in a dress that did not seem to belong to this country; and with her a shepherd, many years older than herself, of the

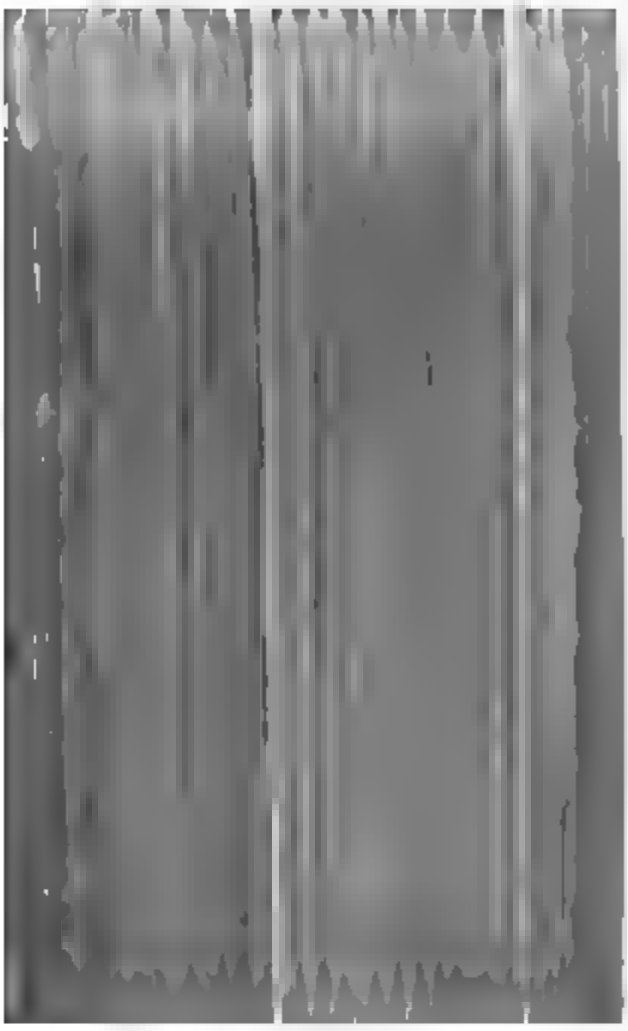
true patriarchal breed. A single sheep with a lamb beside it, made up the group; there was neither ass nor child,—had there been, the flight into Egypt would have been beautifully rendered.

A cold strand from Antibes, and stony; very aguish-looking. Snow mountains or grey ones, but nothing of the luminous blue glow upon them, or of the skyey tint which in warmer moments may lift them up into poetry. Immediate scenery of a quiet unimpressive character, the land scenery I mean, for the sea has always its power and glory. And now a gradual transition into groves of olives, some quite forest trees, and the town of Cujes hung high on its hill amongst oranges and aloes, and looking over woods of olives brightened up with trees of livelier leaf: it is a picture to look up to, and back upon. Hedges of pomegranate and other southern things, and good single trees, mixed every where with the olive—magnificent here, and whose arching branches make natural bowers by the road side.

Crossed a wooden bridge over the Var at St. Laurent, one half in Provence and the other in Piemont, with the Douane at its foot. Here our way was barred by "a limitary cherub," with a

conical auto-da-fé cap, and a broad scarlet band badged all over, like a rat-catcher's, across his shoulders, who bolted out upon us armed with a pair of tongs, with which he handled our passport as if it had been St. Dunstan's nose, and then passed it on to another, who received it (in the tongs) at arm's length. If there was any thing to dread between us, it was we who had cause for alarm, for, poor souls, both themselves and their marshes had fever and ague very legibly impressed upon their title-pages; while Dominique, who was the guardian of the passport, looked as fresh as a sea smuggler. But the official farce over, they proved to be very civil people, who gave us no sort of trouble; our passport was returned cured like a Dutch herring, all chance of cholera smoked out, and the books, which we feared would have been seized, not even looked at.

The women about Antibes, and sometimes at Cannes, wear a sort of hat like the Chinese boatmen with whom we get acquainted on bark fans and Indian screens, very much in the shape of an inverted milkpan, and lined usually with flowered cotton. I think Virginie might have worn one; it does not misbecome the palms and bamboos. By



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with their delicate arabesques, and rainbow balconies, may become it better. I shall know more about it presently.

Eight days have passed, and not a sunbeam; nothing but wet clouds, dripping trees, and mire. The people, who have not had any rain for several months, crow; and we, who looked for an eternal summer, grumble, and are disappointed, perhaps unreasonably, at finding a gap in the circle of flowers which we fancied formed by the seasons at Nice, it was such a pretty illusion. But illusions are fast vanishing every where: kings are becoming citizens; what would have been called magic formerly, is now mechanism; and even the claims of the sun begin to be canvassed,—and still more, disputed, and so successfully, that some of the old licensed Phœbus establishments threaten to shut up for want of business,—Nice amongst the rest, which they say has traded upon a false credit, and is found out. Certain it is, that invalids do not recover here now, as in former times they were said to have done, and perhaps for the very reason that the illusion is destroyed. Hope does so much,

—and confidence,—both with mind and body; or rather with the one by the action of the other.

Another illusion;—the orange-groves, which we expected to see dipping into the Mediterranean, are all enclosed within stout stone walls, and separated from it by a broad strand; few even of the best houses have any view of the sea, except over the roofs of others; but the back look-out from many of those in the Croix de Marbre that have nothing to do with the sea, is still charming. The hills form a basin, within whose circle all fresh, green, and odoriferous things are enclosed: at this moment I look over its edge, and down upon a close carpet of orange trees, whose young shoots beautifully variegate the deeper green of the old leaves; the sloping sides are adorned with gay villas, and natural groves of olives scattered about gracefully, and behind rise the Maritime Alps, covered with snow.

I used to dislike the olive, but I have made up with it now. There is something airy and picturesque in the open spread of its branches, and often an unexpected richness in its deep colouring; it is not always blue, like the dwarf button-shaped tree of Montpellier or Nismes, from which indeed

the olive tree of Nice is as distinct, as the rugged bossy-trunked elder that flings its thick branches over the village pool is from a cauliflower. The olive here grows something like our fine old pear tree, and often attains an extraordinary size; we are told of one near to Villa Franca, the trunk of which measures twenty-two feet in circumference. One of the pleasantest features about Nice is its gardens; they are, even at this late season, enriched with an endless profusion of gay and glowing flowers, which almost perpetuate summer in defiance of the gloomy sky.

What with the cholera, or the dread of it, and the angry state of the political horizon, three-fourths of the strangers who have grafted themselves on France, have been frightened away from it; and one half of those who meditated an irruption into Italy, induced to turn back again when the exaggerated inconveniences of the quarantine stood before them. There are but few English here; formerly every nook was full, now many of the best things are empty: according to the newspapers, Nice is the rendezvous of the high Carlists, the general asylum of all mysterious or suspected political characters, and the chosen retreat of the

Buonaparte family, whose sole representative, however, (as far as she may be deemed one,) is the Duchess of Leuchtenberg, widow of Eugène Beauharnais, who resides with a sick daughter in a beautiful villa near to us.

The weather seems to be the great axis upon which every thing here turns; the sun shines, or the wind blows,—it is hot, or cold, or dry, or damp: whatever it may be, you are told of it a hundred times a-day. Some are interested for themselves, others for some invalid in their family; others, again, for the prosperity of the town, and these, being chiefly shop or innkeepers, are always anxious to convince strangers that the present season is without a precedent; that Nice has nothing to do with these turbulent gentlemen who play at four-corners in the heavens, as if they had every day a fresh wager on the Spaniard and his cloak; but belongs entirely to the gentler powers of the air, to whom these blusterers are only casual visitors.

November 19th. Within the last three days the old sky of Nice is come back again, in its robe of bright blue gorgeously damasked; and we have the sun dancing on the waters, and the soft air of

June,—and, alas! the flies too. The musquitoes are still vigorous: however, with the help of our *cousinieres*,* we can contrive to keep them out; but the double-headed, black-winged, or long green-tailed chimeras that buzz and float about here under the gentle name of flies, are awful: in summer the air must be peopled with them. Next to the flies, the worst thing here appears to me to be the people,—I mean the downright *people*, who are a wild, fierce, dirty-looking tribe, with Italian faces and (they say) French hearts; which means, that they love the French, and regret their sway. The women twist their long hair with black ribbon or velvet, and roll it round the head; when the hair is in good order the effect is pretty, but there are such heads—such tangled forests! And then the under drapery shaming the attempts at elegance in the upper story, and making pitiable contrast with the floating or the braided ribbons.

Sometimes a black or coloured net, with long tassels hanging down fantastically, encloses the hair, and a muslin handkerchief full trimmed is tied over it, marmotte fashion; when fresh, the effect is rather becoming, but particularly slat-

* Musquito curtains.

ternly if soiled. By its position at the smooth side of the Appenines, Nice should belong to France, but by many other tokens, and obvious ones, to Italy. The town is, I understand, greatly admired; to me it looks ragged and disjointed, more (as H—— observed) like the fag-end of a town, than a town itself. Too much of Italy here, and too little. No architecture, no arts, but more than enough of dirt, and—they say—bigotry; but this last charge is foisted backwards and forwards amongst the religious factions that divide the town and (as it is reported) make it sometimes an unpleasant residence for those who desire to worship God after their own hearts and convictions.

I have said that Nice is Italian in two points,—I might have said in many more. The great square (Piazza Vittoria) with its Italian arcades, the best houses with their painted balconies, the humbler ones with their sashless windows, with strings of maize, gourds, and garlick dangling from them, the summer vegetation in the heart of winter, the files of mules hung round with merry bells that jingle not untuneably, the shoals of priests—but a person to whom I made this remark

thought there was a paucity,—and the fine heads which occasionally present themselves, are all as Italian as the sky, when it is in good humour, which is not every day in the week, nor every hour in the day either—even when the sun shines.

Prodigious picture amongst the beggars, (still Italy,) from the loose cloak and flapped hat, to the white beard and wallet. I saw a man yesterday in a fine elaborate attitude, who contrived to beg with a decided air of nobleness,—a difficult thing; painters are obliged to place even Belisarius in repose, and make a mendicant of his guide, but this beggar stood like Jeremiah the prophet, in that arrogance of grief that seemed to say, "I am the man that hath seen affliction!"

The high road here is always encumbered with mules laden with small wine-casks, wood, salt-fish, &c.; the bell-jingling never ceases, not even at midnight. One who was intimately acquainted with the fairies tells us of the thirty-nine silver bells that were hung round the neck of their queen's palfrey when she cantered to Huntley-bank, and broke in upon the repose of Thomas the Rhymer. But had he lain awake here at night,—as I do sometimes, he would have sworn that thirty-nine

times thirty-nine were set in motion, and half a hundred Mabs galloping

> "Over hill, over dale,
> Through bush, through briar,
> Over park, over pale,
> Through flood, through fire."

There is something delightful in being awakened by the silver sound of these fairy bells, and while the moon shines in at the window, having all the magic of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* crossing one's brain, like a golden and transparent ray from some imaginary paradise. All this happened to me last night, and I thought then, as I do now, that there never was such a sun-lit, moon-lit, star-lit thing as that same dream: we go up into the air with it, and the wonder is, that after such a revel of the fancy, one has the heart to note down one's own dull thoughts and faint impressions.

The port of Nice hangs at its side like a child's pocket handkerchief. It is a pretty nook, but it must be found out, and adds nothing to the general effect. The marine view from the town itself is rarely animated by the *near approach* of vessels; "there is no galley with oars, neither does gallant ship pass hereby," or if it does, it must be like a

thief in the night season; for since we have been here scarcely a sail has shown itself, and when one does by chance appear, it is so distant as to seem like a shadow on the horizon. Not far from the port is a very fine terrace, which overlooks the sea, and receives all the sun of Nice on its broad pavement. On week-days it is little frequented, except by a few invalids, who sit and sun themselves like so many lizards on the benches; but on Sunday it is all glitter, like the showy side of an Indian screen; and all the peacocks of Nice trail their tails upon it, opening their green, blue, and golden eyes to the sunbeams. Alas! they are chiefly hen birds; except the tonsured crows, males seem as rare here as females at Swan River, or Van Dieman's Land.

A handsome theatre, but the performance something worse than indifferent. With the Carnival begin the general gaieties of Nice, but at present there is nothing but the opera. Last night we had the *Dame Blanche* in honour of Boieldieu, who was present, and bowed three times in return for the three rounds of applause with which he was greeted at the close of the last scene. The customary crown and customary strophe (in which the

intention was better than the verse) followed. Poor man! he looked as if he would willingly have dispensed with this burst of arranged enthusiasm; but popularity must pay its penalty, ('artful alliteration,') and his patience was most heavily mulcted. It is certainly hard upon an author to have his works forced down his throat in a gritty brown paper covering, and all have not the same easy swallow as Rossini is blest with,—the imperturbable Rossini, who can listen to his most delicious music roared out by the —— de ——, and even accompany it with a smile of complacency.

There are modest people, and even mild ones, who could not do it. The philosophy of temper is a fine science, and ought to be worked at in the schools with more earnestness than Greek or Latin. After all, what are Hesiod and Homer, Virgil and Cicero, amidst "the briars of this working-day world," compared with the vade-mecum of good humour! What is the meteor light of genius (I mean for home uses) compared with that equal ray in which the heart suns itself without fearing that, like many other and more brilliant apparitions, it may suddenly sink under a cloud, and be lost to us in the very moment of our admiration! Just like

our sky of Nice; while the sun beams upon us as if it had nothing to do but to warm this one particular spot, out rushes the wind, and turns all its good to evil.

I have never been well since I came here. Where health is concerned, (I would say, if an invalid were to ask my opinion,) take no man's word for a paradise, even a lemon and orange one, though it sounds so beautifully; believe neither sun or sky, for the one may shine and the other look as clear as truth, and yet there may be a touch of the *bise* lurking in its very brightness. This climate is certainly not a negative one; if it does not do good it is sure to do harm: people who can eat roast-beef in London, find chicken too exciting here. High authorities say that it is dangerous in cases where there is any tendency to inflammation, but beneficial in those of debility, extreme languor, and nervousness unattended by fever. Nice does not however depend entirely on the fame of its climate, and would, even were it sifted out of all its pretensions on that score, still allure by the beauty of its environs, its many conveniences, reputed cheapness, showy exterior, and air of good company; and I would add (consulting my own taste)

its exquisite and ever-blooming flowers, that almost efface the recollection of winter as they do its presence, though not always its secret influence.

The rides about Nice must (I should think) be delightful; but easy drives, and pleasant ones, are wanting here, as in most sea-coast places. The first two or three miles of the Genoa road, (one of the regular *airings*,) are steep and tedious, but overhanging sparkling, and beautiful scenery; but the return by the same route,—the descent on Nice, is really splendid. The bay graciously developed, the bold rocks of Lestrelles stretching their long line into the sea, and bringing out by their depth and firmness the gay, green, inhabited beauty of the immediate scene, the deep valley over which the road hangs, dark with woods, gay with villas, hamlets, gardens,—the river losing itself at one end in the folds of the mountains, at the other in the sea, the town, the fortress, form a bright and harmonious combination, in which each particular part lifts and sustains the others. Another, and a still steeper drive, is that to Villa Franca,—a sea-port, three quarters of a league from Nice; the ascent is almost dangerously sharp, but highly rewarding. The romantic château of

St. André has its repaying coin also, but the road (or a great part of it) is a rumble through the stony bed of the shrunk Paglion; and that to the monastery of Cimiés and its Roman ruins,* is perhaps still worse. If you turn towards Turin, nothing interesting comes within the limits of a drive; and the popular corso is a dull and marshy league between the town and the dogana of St. Laurent.

But the beautiful thing of Nice itself is its winter verdure. The sober and uniform colour of the olive is relieved by the young tint of the orange tree, and by the bright hue of that fine evergreen the caroubier, which, with many others, decorate the hills. Late as it is, (15th of December,) the gardens are still glowing. The English chapel is surrounded by an inclosure of roses, and the poor stranger who comes to die here, sleeps in his distant grave amidst the bloom and fragrance of a thousand flowers.

We may live happily in a foreign land, surrounded by those we love;—where indeed may we

* The remains of the ancient city of Cemenelion, the metropolis of the Maritime Alps, destroyed by the Lombards.

not do so, carrying with us the ties of home, and thinking that we have but to veer round when we wish it, and we are sure to find it in the old place ready to receive us? If the sun of this foreign land be brighter, the air softer, the scenes more vivifying than our own, we consider such things as sureties of life and fresh means of enjoyment; but there is something very sad in the thought of dying in it. To be left behind in unknown company, lying in earth that never will be pressed by home footsteps, with a heavy stone upon one's breast whose inscribed name will never be repeated by a familiar voice, never dwelt on with the tenderness of memory, seems so sad. It is vain to say the dead do not know their loneliness; but the living feel it, the living who loved, and yet must leave them,—and the dying too, whose mournful forebodings anticipate, in those trembling moments when the weakness of human nature overcasts the courage of hope, the utter solitude of the foreign grave.

How many young hearts moulder beneath the fresh roses and the green grass of this English grave-yard,—young, dear, and cherished! and the fair forms that once made shrines for them—all

dust! but living still while life holds in the faithful memory of the mothers who brought them here in hope, and left them here in sorrow. Poor mothers! how must they feel, who return alone to the home where the dear face is seen no longer, and think of the lonely grave in the far-off land of the stranger!

A profound thinker and admirable writer* says, "Man is a noble animal: splendid in ashes, pompous in the grave." Yes, to the world in which his name finds a temple erected to its glory; but not to the heart, which seeing all that was a moment before great or lovely sink into the tomb, feels that the lesson of fate is one of humiliation. The grave subdues worldly pride, by revealing to us the weakness of man; but proclaims the goodness of God, by opening to us a way to the glory of angels.

* Sir Thomas Brown.

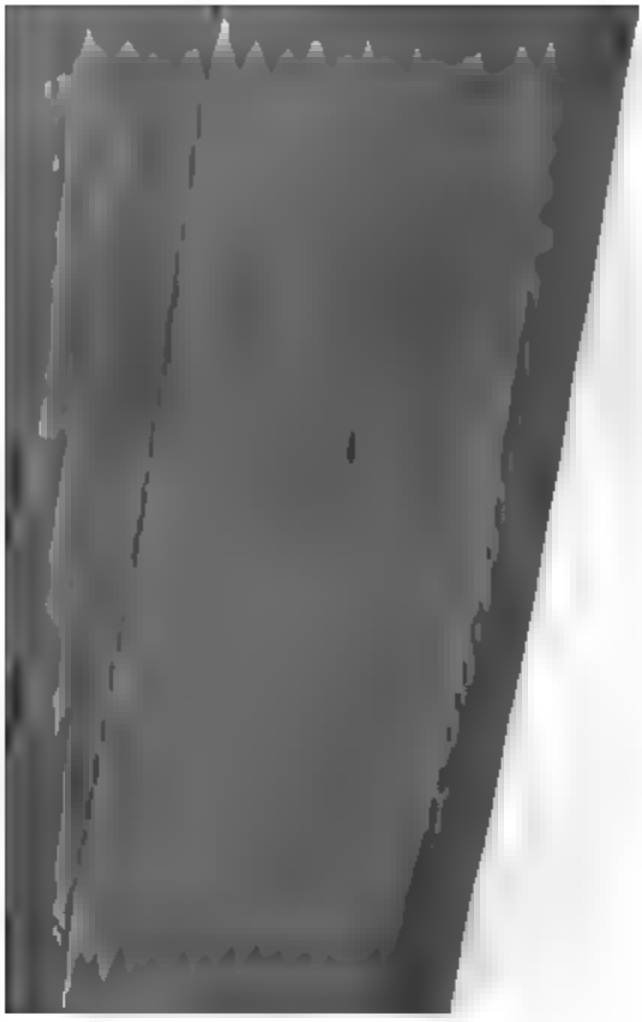
CHAPTER XXVI.

LA CORNICE — MONACO AND MENTONE — THE PILGRIMS — FAMILY LOVE — VINGTIMIGLIA — WELLS AND PALMS — CLOUD ISLANDS — ST. REMO — MY DORMITORY — BEGGARS — PORTO MAURIZIO — ONEGLIA — CORSICAN BOARS — THE ROAD — IMPEDIMENTS — ALLASSIO — THE MERCHANTMAN — BEGGAR-GIRL — ALBENGA — CRAVASOPA — THE MEDITERRANEAN — ITS GLORY — FINALE — NOLI — SAVONA — THE PRIEST — NOISE — ITALIAN BEGGARS — ITALY — COGOLETTO — COLUMBUS — A MAY DAY — LAST SWEEP OF THE CORNICE — CHARACTER OF SCENERY — INFLUENCE OF CLIMATE, ETC. — APPROACH TO GENOA — ADIEU — CONCLUSION.

An hour ago we left Nice glittering in the warm sunbeams of December, (which might pass for midsummer for any thing that the flowers or the sky say to the contrary,) the biting mistral fast asleep, and all the little zephyrs flirting their perfumed fans, and playing spring vagaries. As we advance along the road to Genoa, the surface of the hills is cut into terraces, zone above zone, propped by walls, and cultivated in every spot susceptible of culture. After a sweep through

the mountains, the sea opens again upon us, and we find ourselves on the famous Cornice, the beautiful Riviera of Genoa, looking down at the beautiful port of Villa Franca, with its narrow wooded line running out into the waters; its boats seeming to us like nutshells gliding from shore to shore, and its olive trees touching the sea. The blue Mediterranean is not blue to-day, but a mild slate-colour, crossed by such sunbeams! As we creep along, overhanging the little bays where the waves make room for themselves under the rocks, it is as if we were stealing a march on the Naïades, and surprising the secrets of their coral caves. Such a light upon the still sea! a soft roseate tint melting into lilac, and overcast with an amber shine, like the shifting hues of the mother-of-pearl shell.

Never was any thing like the colouring of this coast, or the beautiful boldness of its sweeping outline. Every town, every village, forms a separate picture, perfect in its way. Eza has its rock-like castle, Turbia its Roman ruin Gothicized, (very original,) and Roccabrunne its fine detached rocks, that have slid down in some forgotten shock and then stopped short, as if pur-



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sconcing rocks that bastion this little paradise are, sometimes like giants' castles, and the world below looks so snug, and safe, and lovely, that a glow of happiness is communicated to the mind by the bare sight of it.

I have heard people say that we ought not to love the world—I mean the world of nature—too well; but I cannot believe it. Is not that love itself a religion, that leads by delightful steps to the most elevated and holy contemplations? But they say the steps ought not to be too delightful, they should not tempt us to linger too enjoyingly upon them; it might be so, if their beauty made us forget that they led to something better, but that can never happen; and is it to be believed that heaven has given us the faculty of admiration, the susceptibility of deep and pure enjoyment,—filling the green earth, the running waters, the blue and starry sky, with innumerable objects that feed such faculties with living nutriment, and yet that we are culpable in using them?

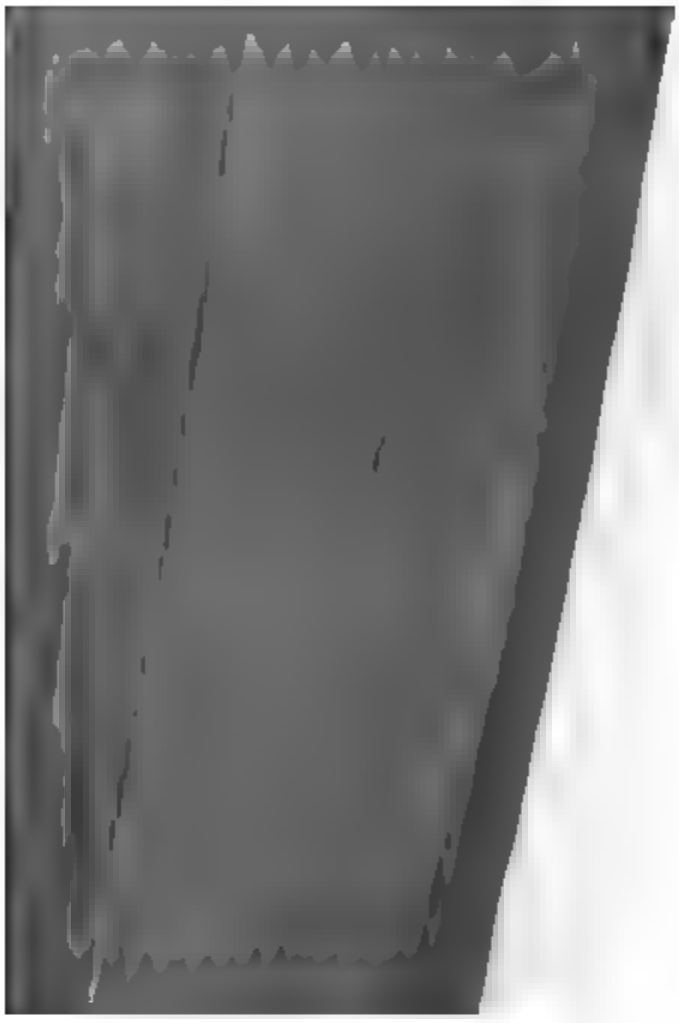
Warm enough at noon to make the sight at least of shade agreeable; all the verdure and glow of an early September day, and the sea breaking gently against the shore with regularly cadenced

sound and languid movement. Mentone beautifully placed, with a mountain screen drawn out behind it,—scathed-looking at a distance, but when near, finely jagged and with a rich shade upon it. Forests of olives of considerable size and beauty, and oleanders making shrubby avenues, or at least garnishing them. These six posts from Nice to Mentone are first-rate, and nothing disparaged (I think) by the sometimes rocky and desert aspect of the scene, which forms a fine contrast to the splendour of its general character. Our road winds along with the sea, and while we bask in a sun warm enough to ripen lemons, (the trees are full of them,) we have every now and then a glimpse of the Maritime Alps, appearing to be quite near to us. A tufted plant of a full rich green carpets the rocks luxuriantly; oleanders grow about in abundance, and the Indian fig, the orange, and the aloe, are as much at home as the thistle.

Turned into a stony valley crossed by a bridge, and there met a family journeying along, a widow, probably, with her children. The mother a hale woman, with a sun-burnt face that had seen trouble, but had worked through it cheerfully, trudged

along stoutly on foot, helping the mule, that made part of the company, forward now and then with a hearty push, or a twitch from a branch that she held in her hand. In this labour she was aided by a boy with a sharp southern eye and crisped hair, on which his red cap sat jauntily; while another, some years younger, ran barefooted by her side, helping her to a fresh bramble from the rocks whenever she dropped her own, which she did twice in adjusting the large white handkerchief that stood out as a shade from her face or flapped into it, as it happened, disclosing at intervals the sprig of flowers that decorates all heads here, old and young. The sack, which served as a saddle, had been given up to the daughter, the delicate and petted child, whose pale face was shaded by a large Indian-looking straw hat, negligently placed over a black net: a little boy, the youngest of the family, sat beside her clinging to her waist, his naked feet dangling, and flowers stuck between his toes.

I love to meet family groupes—when they seem held together by a family spirit,—pursuing their way peacefully; but when they go wrangling along, as sometimes happens, I wish them wiser,



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even the little shops, all overflowing with maccaroni and the yellow family of pastes. Saw a rare head tied up Cleopatra fashion, in a deep orange-tawny handkerchief; it belonged to a girl of the poorer class, and was the handsomest thing that I have seen for many a day; handsome by the remarkable combination of features and expression, without the least setting off of what is called complexion. Beauties are not rare in Italy, but well-looking women exceedingly so.*

Hitherto our shelf—though none of the safest, has been a good road; but soon after Vingtimiglia it degenerates. Olive-orchards at each side, and then a flat tract with a suspicion of miasma in it—perhaps a certainty. Square wells surrounded by low stone walls, such as the woman of Samaria sits upon in the old pictures, are frequent,—so are palm trees; there are nurseries of them about the next town, which is mounted up upon its hill like an old Etruscan city: most of the towns here are so placed. Palms again, and in such numbers, that they lose their desert air and grow sociable, which does not at all become them; they are cul-

* I have made the same remark elsewhere, (page 403, vol. i.,) with respect to the Spaniards.

tivated here as an article of commerce, and their branches sent to Rome for church decorations on certain days of ceremony. A nursery of palms is an ugly thing, especially when bound up as these are, like hospital patients; but one alone has a fine eastern look, and confers dignity on common objects.

To-day the sea is sparkling and animated; barks with their bent sails, crowding canvas enough to overset a brig, yet keeping on steadily; ships sailing towards the sun, others gliding along in the shade, and light waves, like liquid chrysolites, chasing each other. As we wind along the coast, looking always at the sea, I often find myself thinking of Shakspeare's *Tempest*; and when something like an island, though it may be but a cloud, appears on its surface, fancying that it looks like the enchanted home of Prospero and Miranda. I am always thankful for such thoughts and fancies, and love to keep them with me as long as they will stay; finding that they have something of the charm which breathes in every line of that exquisite creation. There are things in the *Tempest* which it is wonderful to find written in words, tempered humanly to the capacity of man; things

that seem as if they had been brought to the rapt mind by some spirit who had dwelt in the pearl palaces below the waves, and knew the hall of stars above them. I seldom see any thing that elevates or touches my mind, without thinking of some passage in Shakspeare; and delightful it is to recall his golden fancies, and the music of his speech, amidst scenes whose magic harmonizes with their power and sweetness.

Entered St. Remo by a street so narrow, that the carriage almost rasped the walls at each side; there are wider ones, and the town is of some size, with dark forbidding vistas, palaces, hovels, arches, palm trees, I think an aqueduct, or something like the remains of one, and a hundred other characteristic features. Italy is all feature in its worst, as well as in its best points: in this speaking country, all that does not excite admiration is not for that reason blank,—the exfoliated arch, the prostrate column, even the wide desolation of the Maremma awaken thought; and if there be but a spark of poetry in the mind, it is sure to be elicited by its collision with objects that, whether they be of our yesterday or the yesterday of other times, belong alike to memory; to that memory

which embalms without disfiguring, and in which the spirit of beauty still lives, as its colouring does in the glowing plumage of a bird whose limbs are stiffened in death.

Who ever talks of Italy as a living country? No one. Its vital beauty, its present pleasures, all—even while we enjoy them, seem to drop into the urn of the past; but from that urn rise shadows strong in power and spell,—illusions which make poetry of the bladed grass, and romance almost of wretchedness.

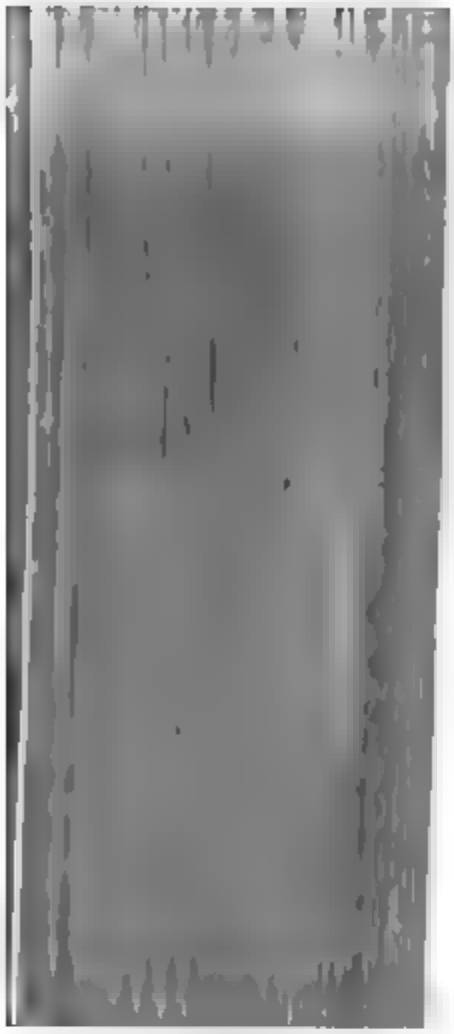
A bleak inn at St. Remo.* It was once a jesuit convent, and we are lodged, I should think, in the church, with the lateral chapels turned into bedrooms. My dormitory must be between twenty and thirty feet high; two curtainless beds, five chairs, and a table compose its furniture: on one side hangs a Magdalen with a ball chaplet of white roses; on the other Santa Lucia, with her eyes spitted on a skewer like a brace of larks, and placed on a plate before her, which does not prevent her from having another pair in her head, with which she contemplates their predecessors.

* Now shut up; better accommodation at the Hôtel de la Poste, but no picture.

Besides these we have better things—a comfortable dinner, a blazing hearth, and clean beds. Olive-wood is here, as at Nice, the general fuel, to which a few large fir-cones make a delightful addition; these cones are used commonly as matches, and being impregnated with oil, blaze when ignited like lighted torches. No candlesticks, but in their stead three brass lamps of a beautiful antique form, with which engravings have made us familiar. Changes are operated slowly in Italy; we have still the costumes of the old painters, the lamps and water-pots of Herculaneum, and the rich unmodernised faces.

While I undressed, a cavalier on the other side of a thin door thrummed the guitar dolefully,—fancied it might be Don Gaston de Cogollos, or something like him; but was disenchanted this morning by the appearance of an elderly tax-gatherer, whose Helen is probably the presiding divinity of some Spaccio di Vino, or Vendita di Sale e Tabacchi.

What with beggars and idlers, we could scarcely make our way to the carriage; but there were two heads amongst them—wonderful ones! with such exquisite chiselling about the lips, and such shad-



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calm winter sky, something in harmony with the repose of earth, the silence of birds, the dumbness of suspended vegetation. But to-day the heavens glorify, the clouds hymn out praise, and the mute earth listens in reverence.

After San Lorenzo, (I think it is,) Porto Maurizio opens in the distance, all the towns here are finely placed, but this imperially. It rises from a rock like a city of white marble, lifted upon arches, and hangs in the air amidst its pines and cypresses; domes and spires terminate its form pyramidically, and rich masses of olive darken round its base. At a distance it seems to form a link between two promontories; but when approached, we find it on a promontory of its own, entirely detached from other neighbourhood. But these beautiful pictures should not be seen too near; even Porto Maurizio, pre-eminent in dignity as it is, does not bear inspection: looked into, the marble becomes stucco, the narrow steep streets lose their aëreal character, and the whole much of the magic which distance has bestowed upon it.

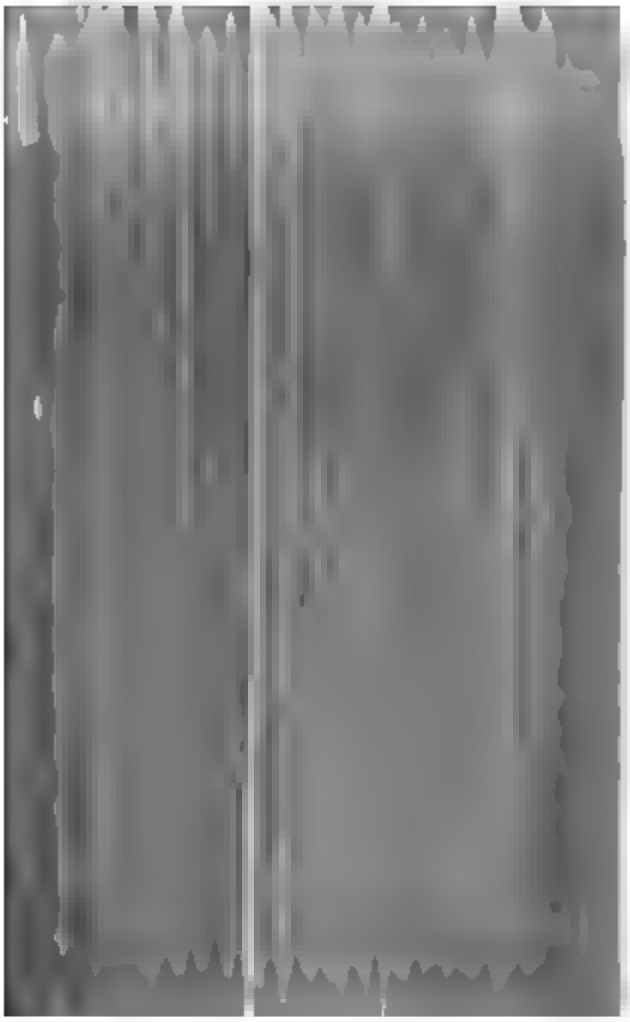
According to the necessity imposed on invalids, we never begin our day's journey till the morning is thoroughly aired, nor continue it longer than

three or four o'clock; the worst part of which arrangement is, that we are obliged to halt at bad inns instead of whisking by them. Last night we would willingly have escaped Oneglia, but were obliged to stop there: a cheerless inn and a smoky chimney, but reckoned (I believe) amongst the *respectables* of the road. Symptoms of Genoa,—white veils and a street paved with flag-stones; but, according to our rate of going, we are a day and a half away from it yet. A tremendous hill, and unfenced, from Oneglia—the sea still, and the sky still—and black too, except where the curtain rises towards the east, and discovers a wide inner roof of golden saffron.

A look back at Porto Maurizio, and a rare one, through the olives that slope down to the sea,—common buildings looking like the peristyles of Claude Loraine, with all his golden splendour and overflowing light upon them. As we approach Diaro, the road sweeps round a lofty projection, and we come down upon a spacious amphitheatre holding within the hollow of its wooded palm—towns churches, hamlets, placed as if nature had made a compact with man, and that each strove to embellish the other's works; and enclosing within its

form a broad and graceful bay, with the town of Bastia spread round its edge, gay with painted houses, and domes variegated like Chinese pagodas. The Cornice abounds in houses of all colours, (yellow the favourite); and red and white churches looking mosque-like, some with ball-domes, or perforated towers, capped with wee cupolas. Flowers of beautiful form and colour still linger amidst the rocks, and the olive-boughs fall on each other like bales of soft cotton delicately stained. The leaf of the olive seems hard and sticky when near, but at a distance the effect is velvety; and when left to grow as nature wills it, and warmed by an Italian sun, has a beautiful cloudiness about it.

December 20th,—though fine, has a touch of October in it; hitherto it has been June, (a few dull clouds excepted,) but to-day we have some forerunners. The sea, though calm, is of an angry purple; flocks of gulls float like foam upon its surface, and a water-spout drops like a firm column into the waves, joining them with the heavens. Corsica is not far off, and here for the first time I have heard the marvellous story of the wild boars, who, wishing in one of their sportive moments to



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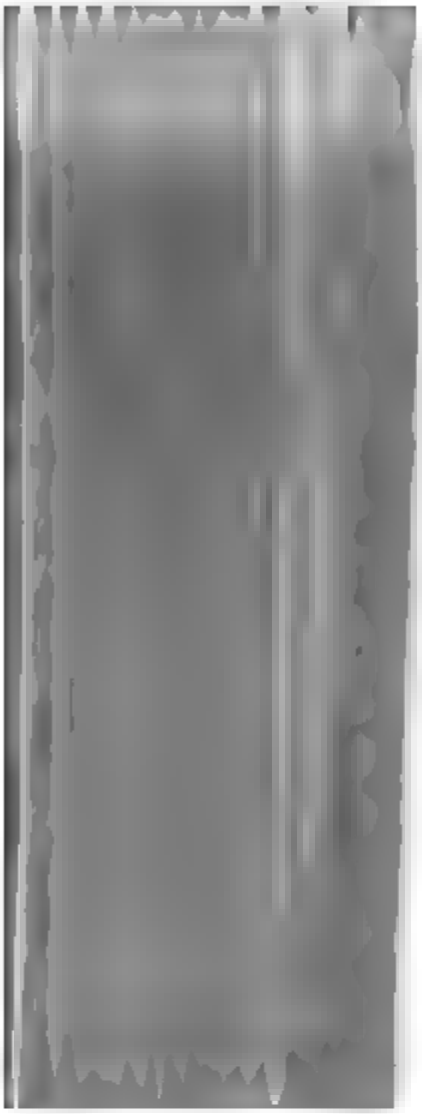
on of being blocked up in a house of refuge; but a mere glide from the warm climate of the south of France to the still more genial one of Italy, and that in the midst of scenery which for itself merits a pilgrimage. With this dread upon him, he forbids all improvements; will have no fence, no bridges, and no widening of the road to enable two carriages to pass. Even in cases where the commune offers to pay the expenses, and only asks for leave, he still refuses it. Such, at least, is the story which we have heard all along the road, and which seems borne out by evidence; for there are no parapets where there is most need of them, and should two carriages meet, one is at a loss to imagine how the matter could be managed, turning or backing being equally out of the question in an unfenced road, without a foot of ground beyond the wheel. Besides, the road is crossed at intervals (and sometimes very short ones) by rivers, which when swollen, as they often are suddenly, and without signal, must be disagreeable and even dangerous impediments. At present they are dry, and we rumble through their rough beds as well as we can, for bridges there are none,—at least none except for foot passengers. In short, a true go-



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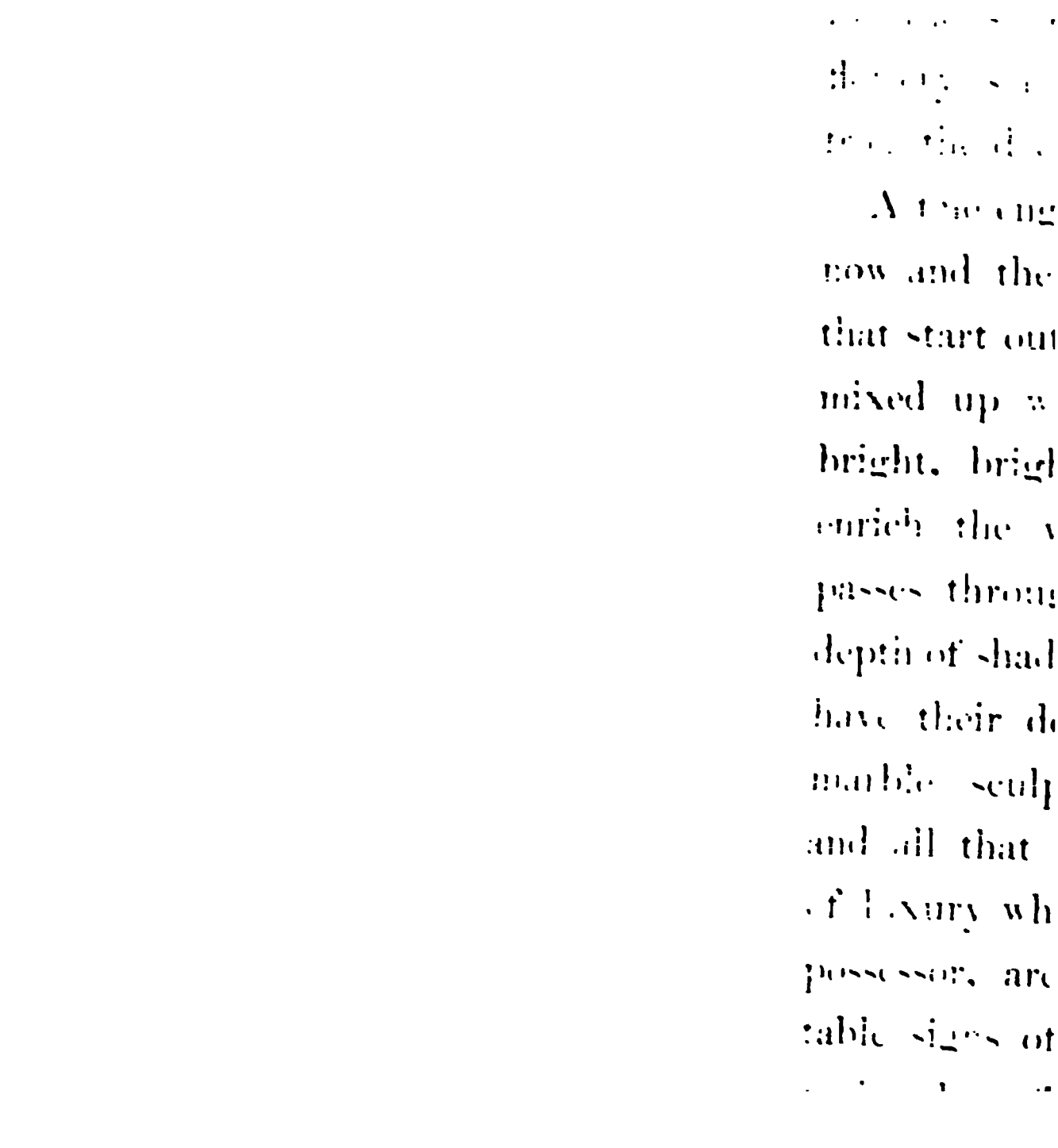
are no islands along this shore, nothing of magnitude enough for the name; but now and then a rocky islet, with or without a tower, looks like some lonely fragment cast out from the land, and left, like a deserted heart, to find its own anchorage. I cannot but fancy that this part of the coast, with its towns lying along the shore, or hoisted up among the rocks, must be like the Morea; perhaps not—perhaps it may be richer, or more beautiful; but there are such centuries of melody in the old word Greece, that its music has become magic; and when we hear that its shores are cold and bleak, we refuse to believe it, and will only see it in the dress with which it has been invested by the light of glory, and the charm of poetry. All the little towns here seem to think themselves connected with the Levant; one half of their cafés are "del Cairo," and we often see just such heads as one might expect to meet with at Smyrna or at Gaza. Another port opens beneath our road, and as we wind down the hills a ship sails into it; while my eye follows its course, I please myself with fancying where it comes from, what shores it may have coasted, at what peopled bay or solitary island it may have touched; whether it brings



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While I looked at it, a beggar-girl on her way to overtake the walkers of our party, who were half a mile a-head, took a passing chance with me. She never slept, (she said,) having a blind mother for whom her fingers went working all the night long, and by day she begged. I never saw a gayer soul; jumping all the time she talked with an air as fresh and new-born, as if she had never heard "the chimes at midnight;" so I looked doubtingly, and she, catching my look, burst out laughing and jumped still higher. It was evidently a hoax, and she enjoyed it quite as much as the hope of the baiochi. The lower class of Italians are never ashamed of being caught tricking, on the contrary they soften the disappointment by making a joke of it. If a man asks a false price for any thing and is found out, he laughs heartily, and takes what you offer him.

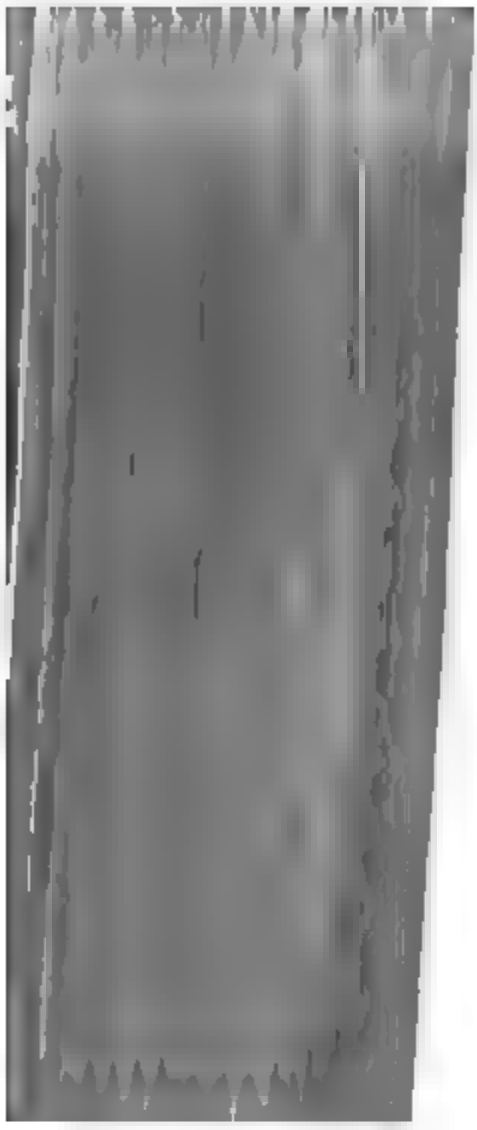
Albenga is approached by an avenue of now leafless trees, starred off with others, and this summer-feature in its barrenness, and the Maritime Alps (which appear quite close to us) in their snows, form the only winter picture we have yet seen. Frightened at the first view of the dirty locanda; imagined rats and all other annoyances

in its worm-eaten furniture, but saw none, and were less wretchedly off than we expected. A flat country about Albenga,—a summer country of vines and olives, soft meadows and quiet beauty, wild hills beautifully tinted, a light bridge, a clear shallow river, making its babbling way on to the sea; but the episcopal city itself (at least what we saw of it) dirty and wretched looking.

It was between Albenga and Finale that the troubadour Rambaud de Vasqueiras, employed by the noble Marquis de Montferrat to rescue the fair Jacobina, came up with and carried her off from the fantassins and cavaliers who were bearing her to Sardinia, there to marry her by force to him whom her iniquitous uncle would have sacrificed her to. We are now journeying along the same ground, but have not as yet fallen in with any runaways, or indeed any human beings except a brisk ragazzo, and a still brisker ragazza, who are trotting on before us, not seeming to need or wish for the interference of either marquis or troubadour. And now comes the Cravasopa, the Chimborazo of the Cornice; steep, unfenced, and coming down upon Finale magnificently, with a road convolving like a serpent's tail, making stages for the eye, and

running down with it from resting-place to resting-place into the green sea,—green to-day as an emerald. The opening of the bay is splendid: the town of Finale lies sparkling along the shore, and farther on another and another whiten in the distance; we seem to hang in the sky, and look down into the beautiful heart of the hollow, upon the sea, the town, the gardens, as if through a diminishing-glass, that in reducing objects to a fairy scale, gave them additional sharpness and lustre. We walked down the mountain, pausing frequently on the magical scene before us. I almost wished that I had never seen the Mediterranean before, it would have been so fine to have burst upon it here.

Beautiful sea! how thy deep bosom shines
Like liquid amethyst,—purple to-day,
To-morrow blue perhaps, as the sky wills,
But always full of beauty and of thought.
This is the sea that bath'd the ancient Greece,
Washing caressingly the marble fanes
Of her cold fabulous gods; or the pale shrines
Where beauty, 'gender'd of poetic thought
And bodied into almost living warmth,
Received perverted homage. Barren spot,
Morsel of earth—yet nursing-soil to legions.
Heroes and sages were thy common growth,



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Watch'd as they rose a
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To ancient sages the k
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Out 'during nations, see
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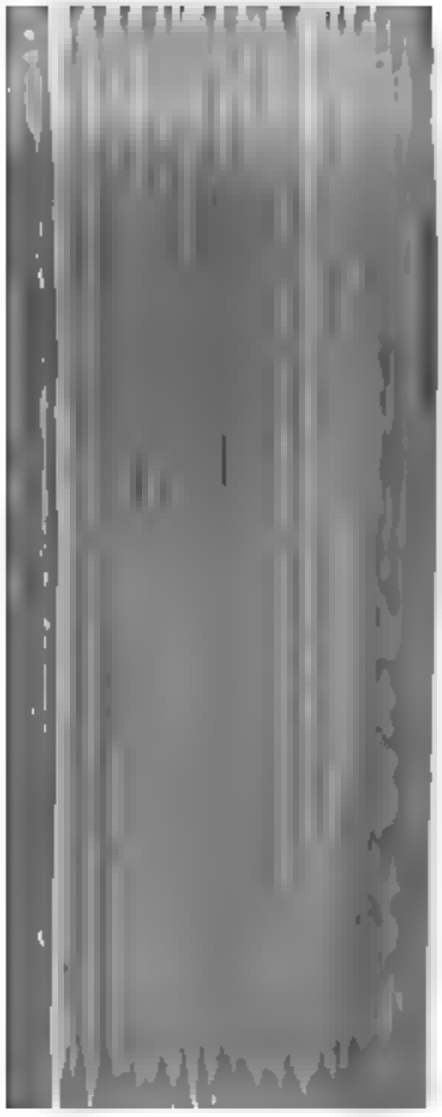
Lesbia, nor yet Camilla; but a creature
Form'd out of many blessings,—made to live,
Or die, if needful, with the heart she loves.

Much of thy glory's o'er,—but still thou art
A noble sea, bathing a lovely shore.
Beautiful here, as a dim dream of heaven;
Lovely yet lonely oft, though fairy piles,
That look like regal dwellings, hang upon
Thy splendid heights,—dungeons when nearer seen,
And tenanted by those who, rightly taught,
Govern'd, upheld, might still make good their claim
To share high ground with others. But to none
Yield they in kindness; that small spot of green
Within their hearts lives on through all their wrongs.

The town of Finale is glistening and pretty; white marble lavished on doors and windows, arcades, houses lifted up on arches, and at least one long street paved with broad flat stones. Beggars innumerable,—some "the tag-rags of mankind;" others in the white Genoese veil, or with the large scarf of flowered cotton thrown over the head. This flowered scarf, covered with purple rocks, and birds and branches of blue and crimson, in the way of the Indian palimpore, forms the only defence which the women of the country, who are obliged to expose themselves to all kinds of weather, seem to use against sun, wind, or rain. It is thrown



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shore: its domineering castle, old walls, square towers, and painted houses, blend into a striking picture; to which the boats, the nets, bright pebbly strand, and busy fishermen give life. These fishermen wear a kind of friar's hood, but narrow and pointed, attached to their short rough coats, and when they pull it over their heads look like stage demons, rather grisly in the distance. I wish the women were not so dirty, for they are often handsome, and in a fine style of handsomeness; but they are such slatterns that their redundant hair is a serious disadvantage to them, even though decorated as it usually is by a red pink, or a natural leaf of geranium. The children along this coast are sometimes lovely, but when pale and squalid, look all the more sickly for their mature eye-brows and long lashes. Savona (where we slept) charmingly placed: women veiled, or wrapped in their palimpores, which have a grand air when advantageously arranged. When we were going off this morning, a priest was standing in the gateway, receiving the homage of two respectable looking men, who spoke to him bare-headed. I never saw such a rayed-out figure; there was more pomp embroidered into the hem of his gar-

ment, than other saints wear on their stomachers. I asked a bystander who he was: "A great man, (he replied,) who has had letters from the king."

"On what subject?"

"I believe about the hospital."

This put me in mind of the boy who boasted that George the Third had spoken to him.—"And what did he say to you?" said his doubting companions: "Get out of the way, you dog!"

The tongue is here decidedly the active member; the body seems to have entered into a family compact against exertion, but the tongue is always alert and oily. One Italian makes as much noise as six Frenchmen. Cannon excepted, there was less uproar in the streets of Paris on the fifth of June, than was made by about twenty wrangling peasants under our windows this morning: they literally bellowed, and seemed as if they had a hearty desire to murder each other, but the next moment were the best friends in the world. This effervescent tendency apart, the Italians are a pleasant people, full of kindness, and so beautifully natural,—never betraying the wish of appearing any thing but what they are. A delightful smell of pitch and tar (delightful to those who love it as

I do) at the next town, a ship-building place, of which I have forgotten the name. A bustling scene; tartanes and polacres on the stocks, flax-beating, rope-making, sail-mending,—all going on together; loads of things for Copley Fielding, and no lack of industry either in the pottery line. Charming strands, but these pebbly stretches are a great and general beauty of the Cornice shore. A detached rock, spare as a watch-tower, rises up from the strand, with a cross upon its summit, and an image of the Virgin beneath. These rude emblems of sincere faith, humbly propitiating help or devoutly expressing gratitude, are often seen on the Mediterranean coast of Italy, and never by me without an emotion which gorgeous monuments do not always awaken. Gleams, and more than gleams, of Genoa and its fine deep-toned mountains leading off into the distance; ragged villages,—but affecting literary reminiscences. I remarked on one lane, "Vico de l'Ariosto;" and on another, "Vico di L. A. Muratori." An agreeable villa or two hereabouts, not shaded by orange groves, (Italian villas are rarely shaded by any thing,) but based in them. No head too old for a sprig of geranium or a Bengal rose: one woman

had a large, deep-yellow flower of the dahlia kind in her black hair, and looked as handsome in her tawny decoration as Mademoiselle Navarre could have done, when she burst into Marmontel's room in her garland of jonquils.

Literally assailed by beggars, who came thronging round us and striking violently against the carriage-windows as if they would say, 'refuse me, if you dare;' women flying at us with their distaffs, and girls screaming out 'illustrious, beautiful, charitable ladies,' till they are as hoarse as ravens.

I have known people who were afraid of a beggar's curse: an Italian beggar's would be an awful one. Here, and all over Italy, the people are noble and graceful in their attitudes: a blind woman asked alms of us, extending her right arm and spreading out her open palm in a grand statue-like way, as if she conferred rather than solicited a favour. Their expressions too are sometimes remarkable: a beggar who once followed us on a road near Florence, finding that his petition was not attended to in any way, exclaimed, "Tell me, at least, that you will give me nothing, and let me go in peace."

At this moment, while I scribble my notes, a

woman with a child in her arms asks alms of me with her eyes; and then turning them on the baby, looks at it as if her soul had gone out from her, and lived in the life of another. No speech could be so eloquent: every movement said,—"Look at this child; it is for him that I beg, not for myself."

"Absent from Italy, it becomes a vision; I forget its details of wrong and wretchedness, its page of desolation, its idleness, its ignorance, and their causes. It seems to me a world set in with stars, instinct with light;—living torches in the grass, in the woods nightingales, in the reeds music, in the air fragrance. A paradise peopled with great spirits; we do not see them, but we feel their presence; it is over all, in all; its influence is universal,—beneficent as light, holy as virtue, sweet as love. I call it in my heart "the lady of kingdoms," and wonder at the prodigality of nature and the skill of man. But coming again into the midst of its beauties, I see the plague-spot that spreads over and consumes them, the leprosy of sloth and superstition, which neither "the cedar wood, nor the hyssop, nor the scarlet, nor the living bird dipped ten times in the blood of the slain bird and

others are seen in the distance vague and veiled, stretching out into the sea. In three days we shall have Christmas, yet if it were not for the young oaks and their crisp dry leaves, and some other trees of ephemeral beauty which mix their bare branches with the wear-and-tear verdure of the pine and olive, we might believe it May, and even a southern May,—not a draggle-tailed one like our spattered queen, who generally sends about her circulars on the first day of her month, putting off gala, hawthorn, rose-buds and all, until June, and sprinkling the poor sweeps till their feathers and fringes take the colouring of the kennel, and literally drop puddle.

And yet as I write my conscience smites me, and acting as a flapper to my memory, brings back some charming May-days of my early youth, when I wove garlands and wore them. Those who weave and wear them now, probably still see the "flowery May" come "dancing from the east;" for them her showers drop balm, and her tardy humour seems but sweet delay; while we who lag behind cry out, "Fair month of May, when wilt thou return?" and hear her answer mournfully, "Never! never!"* In short, we ourselves

change, and so fancy the seasons change with us; while, perhaps, (notwithstanding the affidavit of the sweeps,) May-flowers still bud as early, and blossom as brightly as ever, and the fault may lie —not with the poet's month, but with those whose feelings, like the works of a worn-out watch, no longer keep time.

We now approach the last sweep of the glorious Cornice, this wonderful stretch of sea and shore, which lights up the mind with its splendour, and fills the heart with a crowd of sweet and blended emotions. The extent of this superb line is about one hundred and thirty miles, the road really a cornice, cut out from the rocks and overhanging the sea of wonderful recollections; always following the line of coast as it stretches out into promontories or recedes into bays, with a gracefulness of inflection equal to its powers and boldness, and through scenes whose sublime character strengthens rather than subdues their beauty. I have talked of painted towns, warm bays, and pebbly strands—broad lines of glistening silver when the sun shines on them; but the sudden sun-breaks on the distant mountains, the

* "Joli mois de Mai, quand reviendras-tu?
Jamais! jamais!"

broad shadows, the veiled lights, the ineffable colouring of Italy, must be seen to enable one to form an idea of its beauty. Imagination, which so often outruns reality, is here distanced by it.

It is to these lights that Italy owes the hold which her scenery takes of the imagination. Here the heavens are a party in the beauty of the earth. Where are they not so, it may be said? True, but here they turn the scale; every cloud, every sunbeam, changes the aspect of her mountains; the most permanent of nature's works seem to become transient, changeful, effaceable; their solid forms appear to dissolve in light or to eclipse in shadow, but only to burst out again in that unimaginable splendour, which, as if it shunned to be too powerful, draws a fine veil over its brightness, and allows the eye to contemplate its glory. Hard, cold, glaring, are words that have no meaning in the mountain countries of Italy; here the air warms into the soft glow of visible beauty, and the harmony of colouring affects the eye as that of sound does the ear, taking it captive by its sweetness.

In Switzerland the mountains sit heavily on their foundations; in Italy they have an aëreal

look, as if they had less root in the earth; they are more visionary, more like the dissolving magic of a dream. When the former change their character of high-toned and powerful reality, it is to assume the gaunt and phantom shapes in which they visit our startled sight; when the shades of night or the cold moonshine falls upon them, then they are like the frontiers of chaos; while the latter rise against the heavens like the "verdurous walls of paradise."

With such a country before them, such an open book,—memory on one page, beauty almost divine on another, and inspiration (one should think) on all; such things to love, to lose, to struggle for, to glory in, how is it, many will will say, that the Italians of the present day do so little? Thought creates action, its impetus awakens the energies of the mind; perhaps it sleeps amidst the fulness of beauty, perhaps in the enjoyment of gratified sensation; enough of the *good* is felt, to account for that shrinking from the effort which must be made to obtain the *better*.

Yet Raffaelle did not sleep, nor Michael Angelo, —nor the great Sforza, or still greater Columbus. Did Tasso sleep, or Ariosto, or the immortal

Dante? or hundreds of others whose bright names are sown in stars?* And yet the same gorgeous sky shone above them, the same illuminated page lay open before their eyes. No, it cannot be the atmosphere, nor the sky, nor the immortal beauty, all-satisfying though it may be, which enervates the mind and paralyses its movements; but that permanent evil, of which I have already spoken,—the want of a wise, enlightened, and applicable government. A good government, founded on the principles of justice and rational liberty, which encourages the advancement of knowledge, and protects the means of moral improvement, is the most effectual promoter of enlightened views, and their results. A bad one,—when so bad as to rouse even the indolent and complacent to a sense of wrong and an earnest desire of right, has often produced the same effect on minds fitted by the experience of evil to struggle for good, and estimate its value. That the Italians of the present day do little, is true; but the charge of inertness is applicable only to the

* I say nothing of the old Romans, for I do not intend to enter into a disquisition, but merely to note a thought which admits of being more largely developed.

mass of the people, who, in their profound ignorance, suffer without knowing that they are oppressed, and who in that same ignorance have lost the knowledge of the high example left them by their great ancestors. But who can doubt that there still exist in this fair land spirits worthy of it, noble and enlightened ones, fitted to work out its regeneration? and who, though fettered, are yet not impotent nor speechless, though compelled to practise silence?

I can easily conceive that where all is *spectacle* as in Italy, man may become so much a spectator, that his character may assimilate itself with the part, and his mind lose—if not the faculty of action, at least the habit. In Italy there is so much to wonder at, to delight in, that the springs of original thought may be weakened by the constant emotions of wonder, pleasure, and admiration. Reflection is naturally turned into channels through which the reflections of thousands have already past; thought is oftener perhaps indulged than created, or put in motion; or should it be exercised, it is chiefly on antiquarian conjecture, or the comparative excellence of the higher works of art. Man looks on, and revels in the contempla-

tion of what other men have done; until, absorbed in the ravishing study, he forgets that he himself has powers, whose moment of action is passing away—perhaps for ever.

Perhaps the grey and solemn scenery of the north may have a character about it more calculated to foster meditation than the glow and splendour of the south, whose beauties seem to belong rather to the domain of fancy. In the south we enjoy; in the north, enjoyment not being always within reach, we reflect; and in reflecting, call out those faculties of the mind which are the elements of intellectual action. In the south the banquet is always before us, the cup for ever at our lips; the inhabitant of a country to which nature has been prodigal confides in her promises, and often throws his powers of mind upon the stream of life, to be carried along as it lists; while he, whom fate has planted in the coyer north, must work, and often springs a mine in doing so.

Our road at this moment runs away from the sea, and we wind along amidst hills that have hamlets, and churches, and farm-houses thrown about on them; and a fore-ground of vines, with trees scattered singly, or raised up grove-like on banks.

The Genoa fashion of supporting the vine on slight pilasters prevails here, and when the leaves are out, and the tendrilled branches fall down in rich volutes, the effect is beautiful, and not unpleasing even now. Iron-works and some handsome houses distinguish Voltri, and now comes a succession of villages and hamlets closing in so fast upon each other, that we seem to have entered the suburbs of Genoa miles before the city presents itself. Three notes of admiration for the sunset that we leave behind us at the corner of the Fanal,—it deserves them all. How this magnificent Genoa glows and sparkles in it! but as we advance twilight drops like a curtain on us, and the glimmering palace, the buzz of overflowing streets, the clamour of human voices, and the noise of evening drums, succeed to the light of the sun and the silence of nature. I know of nothing like the first burst of Genoa when the colouring of the air is favourable to the grave and imperial character of its beauty, but I have said so much of it elsewhere,* that I must be silent now.

I have dwelt on the Cornice because that in such scenes delay is indulgence, and because it is

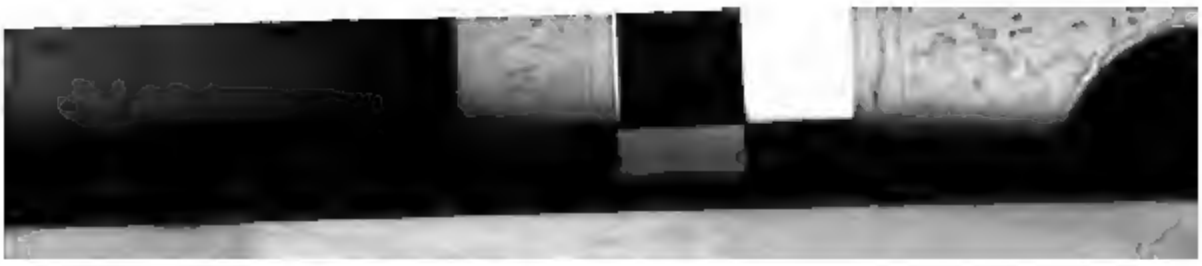
* "Slight Reminiscences of the Rhine, &c."

only pre-eminently beautiful, but still new. By and by travellers will discover the advantages of escaping the Alpine snows, and of journeying in the depth of winter through summer scenes in a summer atmosphere,—scenes of amazing grandeur and consummate beauty; and then the Cornice will be a beaten track, like other beaten tracks in this dear Italy, and will have lost its freshness even while it retains the power of awakening new ideas in the minds of those who contemplate its rare magnificence.

After wandering long in Italy, we have come back again, with our imaginations full of its immortal beauty, to the green valleys and eagle mountains of the Pyrenees; charmed more than ever with the sweetness of the one, more than ever impressed with the majesty of the other: finding here the same magical light that we had left behind us, the same aëreal colouring, the same southern sky and bountiful nature, with an individual physiognomy of beauty which, if it belongs less to the great story of the past than that of Italy, if it has not the deep and profoundly touch-

ing character of moral melancholy impressed upon the general aspect of the scenery in that divine land, possesses in its noble identity a high and powerful charm, and in its exceeding beauty, its fresh and romantic loveliness, (welcomed again and rapturously both by the heart and fancy,) another that need not shrink from a comparison with whatever nature has formed of fairest and most engaging.

I have sketched the Pyrenees as I found them; not daring to hope that I have done justice to their infinite beauty, but earnestly wishing to make it (as far as my small help can do so) better known in a country, where all that is grand or lovely in nature is perhaps more deeply felt, more generally appreciated, than in any other.

THE END.

Maurice and Co., Fenchurch street.